We propose a concept of school that will ensure the holistic development of the child and the school will act as a catalyst to become an agent of change and development in the community. The school needs to be a center of learning and change where children will grow up to be responsible citizens of the country who will accelerate the country’s growth and development. And this development will not just be economic, but also the overall growth of the individual. In order to turn the school the center of the microcosm that will nurture the student with knowledge to make the best use of the available resources and rapidly move themselves and the community towards a path of progress, we need to focus attention on all aspects of school education.
Certain short term and immediate interventions need to precede the long term ones. For instance, interventions related to curriculum and pedagogy will require certain supporting soft infrastructures in order for them to have the desired impact, whereas hard infrastructure requirements can be met in a faster way.

Innovative nature of the program:

This program envisions bringing together different services meant for the child and delivering them through the school in a systematic manner. Right now, the various agencies are working parallel to each other and we bring them together for convergence, with the department of elementary education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan being the main facilitator, but receiving active support from all the various agencies such as NHM for school health program, Panchayats for community participation, Social Welfare Department for improving connect between anganwaadi workers teaching 5 year olds and ka shreni teachers teaching 5 year olds to improve transition and school readiness at age 6, public works department to provide water and sanitation in the schools etc and to implement the programs meant for the child in a systematic manner. Once the department of elementary education and the
sarva shiksha abhiyan are on board completely we request for active cooperation from the other departments as well. We also want to learn from best practices within the state of Assam and Telangana to improve learning outcomes. We have noticed through our research that most schools in India are multi grade multi-level by default. This is so as there are schools with low enrolment as well. For example a school with 50 students will have only 2 teachers according to the RTE, 2009, but these 50 students may be distributed across the five grades of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Through our research we have identified the teaching learning methods adopted by the DIET, Jorhat and Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh to be innovative and suited to the needs of the teachers and students in Assam and Telangana and believe it needs to be adopted in a larger scale. We plan for improving learning outcomes by adopting multi grade multi-level teaching learning methods that have been contextualized to the ground realities of Assam and Telangana and specifically address the problem of multi grade classrooms in Assam and Telangana respectively.

**School as a Way of Life and its Impact on the National Education Policy Draft (2016)**

The various suggestions put forth by the Model District Education Project (MDEP) under its School as a Way of Life framework have found strong backing in the inputs for the National Education Policy draft (2016). The MHRD embarked on a time-bound grassroots consultative process to facilitate the revision of the National policy of Education framed in 1986 and modified in 1992 and form the New Education Policy. The inputs for the National Education Policy draft’s mission states that it aims to “Foster quality education with a strong focus on reforms relating to curricula, learning materials, pedagogic processes, learning assessment, teacher quality and performance, and institutional leadership and management with a view to enabling all students at all levels of education to attain the specified learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) that are required to lead a productive life, participate in the country’s development process, and respond to the emerging global challenges”. This very closely mirrors the recommendations that MDEP had made under School as a Way of Life to the Prime Minister’s office several months back and given below

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1 Dr. Nirupam Bajpai, Senior Development Advisor, Earth Institute, Columbia University and Director, Model Districts Education Project made these suggestion to Nripendra Misra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India on December 3, 2015.
is a summary of the common themes between the interventions under School as A Way of Life and the inputs provided for the National Education Policy draft (2016).
How MDEP’s School as a Way of Life impacted the National Education Policy 2016

<table>
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<th>School as a Way of Life</th>
<th>Steps taken</th>
<th>National Education Policy 2016</th>
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| Early Childhood Education is very important. In the context of India it is especially important. In the research conducted by MDEP on textbooks and teacher training it was found that teachers have to spend a lot of extra time and efforts in Class 1 on trying to acquaint students with the alphabets and numerals. If ECE curriculum is implemented properly then it will help the students in the learning process and will also help the teachers to stick to the prescribed curriculum in Grade 1. The teachers will have to spend less time in the initial months to teach literacy and numeracy skills again and thus not delay the process of learning in every subsequent class. | - Create awareness about Early Childhood Education  
- Identify the training needs of the anganwadi workers to transact ECE  
- Identify education volunteers to teach ECE.  
- Train the anganwaadi workers and teachers to transact the ECE curriculum. Most anganwaadi workers have minimum education qualifications (matriculate) and if they are given the adequate training then they can surely transact the curriculum  
- It should be ensured that children should get early learning in their mother tongue, with a transition/bridging strategy to move toward the school language by the time the child reaches grade 1 and beyond. | - Expanding early childhood education services to ensure that all pre-school age children aged 4-5 years attain the learning and developmental readiness required for smooth transition to primary education, with particular attention to children belonging to disadvantaged population groups (Page 15)  
- Section 4.1 talks about pre-school education and the following initiatives are mentioned which closely aligns with the MDEP’s objectives.  
- As a priority, a programme for pre-school education for children in the age group of 4 to 5 years will be implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Women and Child Development.  
- Presently, the Anganwadis under the ICDS are not adequately equipped to provide pre-school education. To strengthen the pre-school education in Anganwadis, steps will be taken in consultation with states to frame curricula and develop learning materials, within a year, and provide training to Anganwadi workers. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India  
- Some Inputs for Draft NEP 2016 Page 18 of 43  
- State Governments will prepare cadres of pre-primary teachers, and create necessary facilities for their pre and in service training. The transition from Anganwadi to pre-primary school will be |
Girls, who are already disadvantaged in accessing education, are doubly penalized as inadequate sanitation facilities allow them no privacy. The lack of private sanitary facilities for girls discourages parents from sending girls to schools, thereby contributing to girls dropping out as they are about to reach puberty. As a result, we find fewer women teachers who are needed to encourage girls to attend school. This complex relationship of multiple factors forms a vicious cycle hindering the entry and retention of girls in school. This issue is as valid, if not more, at primary level as it is at the secondary school level in rural parts of the country. It must be imperative for all schools to have functional toilets, separate for both girls and boys. Mere construction is not likely to solve the issue. These toilets must be properly maintained and regularly cleaned for them to be useful.

| Gradual and seamless, and it should be left to each State to determine the time frame for achieving it. |
| • In due course, all primary schools will cover pre-primary education. For this, efforts will be made to locate all Anganwadis either in the school premises, or as close to these as possible. 5. Appropriate regulatory and monitoring rules and mechanisms will be designed for private pre-schools. |

- Identify schools which are yet to have separate functional toilets for girls and boys.
- Identify the roadblocks to providing separate functional toilets for girls (lack of space etc.) and resolve the issues so that construction of separate toilet for girls can go ahead.
- Ensure all the remaining construction of toilet for girls is completed at the earliest.
- Ensure all the toilets have proper plumbing and provision of running water.

One of the challenges mentioned in the National Education Policy draft 2016 is regarding the retention of girl students in school “Though the dropout rate is a matter of concern in the case of all categories of students, drop-out rates among socially and economically disadvantaged groups, especially for girls from these groups, remain higher than the national average. This brings into focus the need to undertake measures to improve retention in schools of children from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.” This can be addressed in part by providing separate toilets to both girls and boys with running water facility.
remain in use for children and hence the community to learn sanitary ways of using and maintaining latrine facilities. We need to ensure that 100% of the schools have separate toilet for girls. Construction is not enough. Toilets should be supplemented with a source of running water. Toilets will remain locked and unused unless they are regularly cleaned and maintained, and the use of water is one of the basic ways of washing and sanitizing toilets on a daily basis. Every toilet, we advocate, should have a water tap. A simple act of washing hands with soap can reduce diarrhoea by one third. There should be soaps and hand washing facilities for children who should be encouraged to wash their hands after using toilets and before and after meals.

A number of studies highlight the importance of oral hygiene for primary school children. Dental diseases such as dental caries, gingivitis, periodontitis, and ulcers are common ailments among children of primary school. Neglect or lack of proper attention can adversely affect quality of child’s learning as they will be unable to concentrate on their tasks. All the research done in this field points towards an obvious co-relation that students from poor socio-economic background are more prone to oral health related

| Section 4.12 of the National Education Policy draft 2016 emphasizes on the proper implementation of the school health program and its digitization. It says
| • The implementation of the school health component, generally administered by the Health Department will be supported by the education departments and schools. The schools will draw up a roster for check-ups and ensure that the schedule is followed. As a part of the Digital India initiative, apps will be developed to track and monitor the health record and status of each child.

• Encourage the students to brush their teeth every morning.
• Tell them the benefits of keeping good oral hygiene.
• Ensure all children rinse their mouth after every meal.
• Educate the parents and community members on the importance of maintaining oral hygiene.
• Keep a daily record of whether the students are brushing their
complications. Also, these complications can be mitigated if some form of school dental health program is implemented. A simple intervention of teacher supervised tooth-brushing exercise during school hours with toothpaste containing 1,450 ppm fluoride can reduce dental caries in primary school children. This has been proven by research that concluded that intervention receiving children are significantly less susceptible to dental diseases than the children in the same community who do not receive this intervention\(^i\).

The **Mid-day meal** was instituted to improve the nutritional needs of school going children and till date it is the largest such scheme in the world. We believe that in addition to the Mid-Day meal the school going students should be provided breakfast in the morning. The students should be provided with some locally available fruits (banana) or local breakfast that is easily available and inexpensive but at the same time nutritious. There is sufficient evidence to support how a healthy breakfast meal can lead to improved nutritional and learning outcomes among school children. A number of studies have proven repeatedly that children who eat breakfast on a consistent basis tend to have superior nutritional profiles than their teeth

- Identify the locally available breakfast items in the village/cluster/block in which the school is situated.
- Create a task force that will ensure that the weekly breakfast items are identified and procured.
- Create a system of quality checks of the breakfast items by the SMC’s/ Mother’s group
- Involve local self-help group so that this program benefits the community and thus provides a sustainable model
- Unburden teachers from providing the Mid-Day meal so that they can focus on teaching.

Though not directly but it provides impetus to the MDEP’s goal of promoting better oral health and hygiene and also promoting safe techniques such as hand washing to promote health.

Though the National Education Policy draft 2016 doesn’t mention school breakfast program it does mention the need to unburden teachers from the tasks of cooking, supervising and administering Mid-Day meals. It says

- The school nutrition programme implemented through the on-going Midday Meal Scheme (MDMS) has helped supplementing nutrition and promoted social equity. The MDM programme will be extended to cover students of secondary schools. Teachers will not be burdened with the task of supervising cooking and serving mid-day meals. The practices of engaging the services of reputed community organisations to provide the mid-day meals cooked in centralised kitchens and distributed in the schools will be encouraged.
Breakfast-skipping peers\textsuperscript{iii}. In addition, having breakfast has been shown to improve students’ attendance, attentiveness, and achievement, and reduce discipline problems in school\textsuperscript{iv}. Well-conducted evaluations suggest that the availability of feeding programs in public schools throughout the academic year increases the probability that children will eat breakfast and improve their educational status\textsuperscript{v}. There also exists empirical evidence to the fact that breakfast is positively associated with improved psychosocial development of children\textsuperscript{vi}. They can concentrate on the task of teaching and outsource cooking to be community managed.

### Multi-grade-multi-level (MGML) Pedagogy

Multigrade-multilevel (MGML) pedagogy refers to the teaching of students in a setting where children of different ages, grade levels and competencies are learning in the same group. This pedagogy encourages the role of a teacher as a facilitator and makes use of a child centered and activity based teaching learning process. By default most schools in Assam and Telangana are multi grade, multi-level and training teachers on this pedagogy will equip teachers on how to handle this situation and improve learning outcomes.

- Identify school that have less teachers and finalize a training schedule for the teachers on MGML
- Create awareness in the community about MGML
- Facilitate interactions between local partners and MGML experts (RIVER, Mr. Bordoloi from DIET, Jorhat, Mr. Mishra from SCERT, Chhattisgarh; The Raos from RiVER, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh).
- Take a lead in organizing workshops bringing experts from different adaptations of model to work closely with the

Section 4.3 of the National Education Policy draft refers to learning outcomes and the need to enhance learning outcomes for enhancing the quality of elementary education. A few highlights are as follows:

- Within the parameters prescribed by the RTE Act, States will have the flexibility to design and plan for the infrastructure keeping in view the local conditions. Local norms, appropriate for local conditions, will be evolved, if necessary through amendment in RTE Act, for ‘alternate schools’ which offer educational interventions for specific categories of very deprived and migrating children, and those living in difficult circumstances.
- The present provisions of no-detention policy will be amended, as it has seriously affected the
- Facilitate the formation of district task forces and propose to the districts and the states to send them on a training program
- Monitor the setting up of model schools

- Section 4.5 also emphasizes this through the medium of re-structuring “National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will undergo a re-orientation to address issues of deteriorating quality of school education and periodic renewal of curricula and pedagogy to move from rote learning to facilitate understanding and encourage a spirit of enquiry.”

- Effective steps will be taken to improve teaching standards in schools, create mechanisms for supporting children through special academic support and providing access to multiple sources of knowledge, including e-resources.

- It is the need of the hour to introduce value education in the curriculum which teaches about civic responsibilities and duties. It is the need of the hour to introduce value education in the curriculum which teaches about civic responsibilities and duties.

- Identify what can be added to the value education curriculum in consultation with the experts

- Section 4.5 of the National Education Policy draft 2016 mentions the need for curriculum renewal and examination reforms. A few of their suggestions

- Academic performance of students. The no detention policy will be limited up to class V and the system of detention will be restored at the upper primary stage. Academically weak students will be identified, based on CCE conducted by schools, for providing remedial instructions.
should also include values like telling the truth, importance of punctuality, helping others etc. These are important concepts to learn at an early age so that students grow up to be responsible citizens of the country.

2 Civics to Politics: The Challenge of Text Creation – Latika Gupta

at NCERT, New Delhi and other academicians
• Prepare a value education curriculum
• Train teachers on how to transact the value education
• Involve activity based learning and community participation in the value education
• Identify a few teachers in the state who are doing innovative and outstanding work in the area of primary education and provide recognition to their work. This recognition can be in the form of a certificate of appreciation and the District Administration can share the innovative work done by the teacher in a public meeting.

directly relate to the ideals MDEP believes in such as
• Curricular reforms will be carried out to meet the emerging aspirations and align to national goals of social cohesion, religious amity and national integration. Curriculum should be outcome-based and aim for overall development of students through imparting life-skills in an increasingly technology driven environment. All students will be taught both fundamental duties and rights so that they can become responsible citizens both within the country and in the world.
• Issues of gender, social, cultural and regional disparities, with an emphasis on unity in diversity, will be properly addressed in the curriculum and its transaction. Curriculum will cover the issues of social justice and legal measures in order to avoid social discrimination. It will be ensured by the curriculum and text book development agencies that text books promote harmony and do not contain any discriminating issues/eventsexamples in the context of gender, disability, caste, religion, etc. Citizenship education, peace education, character building, legal and constitutional literacy, financial literacy, environmental sustainability and other common core which will be promoted through all the subject areas.

Section 4.10 echoes MDEP’s objectives of
Section 4.11 also echoes MDEP’s suggestion on this front which says

- Indian culture, local and traditional knowledge will be given adequate space in the school education. Ethics education will be integrated at all levels for inculcating values of equality and equity, social justice, fraternity, democracy, responsible freedom and liberty, spirit of fraternity and national integration.
- Educational institutions will instill among students civic sense, discipline, punctuality, cleanliness, good conduct, empathy and compassion for the elderly, downtrodden and weaker sections, respect for women and a humanistic spirit.

Schools should provide a **safe space** for children to grow both **physically, mentally and emotionally**. This can be in the form of creation of physical boundary walls, providing conducive classroom environment for children to learn without discrimination based on caste, class and gender. Schools are central to community life and hence it is

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<th>Safe Space for Children</th>
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<td><strong>Physically</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote infrastructural safety within the school compounds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mentally</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote gender sensitive teaching learning processes in the school</td>
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<td><strong>Emotionally</strong></td>
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Section 4.2 mentions the protection of rights of the child and adolescent education. A few highlights include:

- A framework and guidelines for ensuring school safety and security of children will be developed and will be made a part of the eligibility conditions for a school education institution for recognition and registration.
important that there should be zero tolerance for discrimination in classrooms in order for children to feel safe and learn.

| • Each school must conduct a gender audit to understand areas of intervention within classrooms. (A prototype for gender audit questionnaire has been created by the MDEP team) | • Self-learning online programmes on child rights will be developed for the benefit of students, teachers and parents. |
| • MDEP has drafted certain guidelines in order to ensure each classroom is a gender sensitive classroom. MDEP recommends that every classroom that follows these guidelines should be certified as gender sensitive school. The process of certification must be conducted by the BEO based on the recommendations by CRC. This certificate must be renewed every year after evaluating the classrooms for gender sensitivity. | • Schools will engage trained counsellors to confidentially advise parents and teachers on adolescence problems faced by growing boys and girls. |

According to the National Achievement Survey Cycle 3, nationally there is no significant gender difference in both math and language performance. This goes on to say that SSA has been successful in reducing gender gap both in terms of enrolment as well as performance. The next step towards a holistic school experience is to move towards gender sensitive classrooms. Children are socialized to develop gendered identity very early on in life. This socialization is not limited to families alone but extends to schools which act as microcosm of our society. Schools often provide children with schemas that help them build their understanding of gender. Often these gender roles are manifested in the form of classroom instruction, curriculum, teacher’s attitude etc. Hence it is important to provide children with alternative schemas to help children develop a well-rounded view of gender and avoid sex typing. This can be done by bringing in structural and attitudinal changes within

According to section 4.6 of the National Education Policy draft 2016, which addresses Inclusive Education and Student Support the following areas, highlight common themes with the MDEP.

• Issues of gender, social, cultural and regional disparities, with an emphasis on diversity, will be properly addressed in the curriculum and its transaction. Curriculum will cover the issues of social justice and harmony and legal measures in order to avoid social discrimination.

• A zero tolerance approach on gender discrimination and violence will be adopted. The State will endeavour to enhance induction, retention and substantive presence of women in the higher education sector through various kinds of affirmative action. For this, greater efforts will be made to ensure the placement and recruitment of women in the higher echelons of university administration.

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classrooms and avoiding sex typing.

- Teachers must be provided training on gender sensitivity.
- SCERT has worked tremendously on creating more gender inclusive textbooks and must continue the exercise to include more local context specific role models in textbooks.

Today community participation is being increasingly encouraged in order to bring accountability in the education system. For this purpose RTE mandates school management committees (SMC) in every school. The idea behind these committees is to encourage communities to participate and own the education system which in turn would bring accountability within the system.

The concept of School as a way of life posits that Schools form the center of community life and both interact and affect each other. Schools reflect the ethos of community life and also have the power to influence community thinking. Thus learning is not restricted to students alone but disseminates to the community as a whole. Ideas of holistic learning can only happen when communities are actively involved in schools.

- Regular open house to be conducted for parents to discuss student result and share expectations between teachers and parents
- Annual Day function to be organized each year. Schools should have provision for a grant for organizing such a function.
- Creation of Mothers groups and PTA’s in every school: SMC’s are already mandated by the RTE however their role is mostly restricted to administrative work related to schools. Our field experience with some schools in Morigaon, Assam shows that Section 4.10 of the National Education Policy draft 2016 talks about the SMC’s role in reducing teacher absenteeism and says the following “Issues relating to teacher absenteeism, teacher vacancies and lack of teacher accountability will be resolved with strong political consensus and will. Disciplinary powers will be vested with the School Management Committees (SMCs) in case of primary schools and head teachers/principals in upper primary and secondary schools to deal with absenteeism and indiscipline, assisted by technology for recording attendance with mobile phones and biometric devices.”

Section 4.13 of the policy draft reiterates the importance of community participation for improving the quality of education and says “A school governance model with an appropriate framework of autonomy with accountability is necessary to enable the school system to respond to changing circumstances, and to initiate remedial action
Mothers group can be an effective way of encouraging participation of women in schools. The same can be tested out in other states as well. Mothers can be involved in many activities after school hours like conducting remedial classes, volunteering with teachers in managing students, organizing school functions, monitoring dropouts and encouraging community to send girls to school etc.

- Monitoring and Evaluation of SMC activities to be conducted every year.
- Capacity building workshops on fund management and other need based trainings must be conducted every year.

wherever required.”

A few important things mentioned are:

- The central and state governments will address gaps in policy framework regarding the implementation of School Management Committee (SMC) within the framework of RTE Act and provide broad implementation and monitoring guidelines.

- As a part of the oversight of the SMCs, the state governments will provide clear guidelines on the election process, frequency, tenure, roles and responsibilities and their functioning. States will endeavour to increase allocations for SMC training and ensure that schools receive their grants in time, to effectively implement School Development Plans (SDPs). SDPs will be integrated into the budgeting and planning process at the district level.

- Improved school governance requires expanding the definition of school leadership to a more holistic framework which includes defining the roles and responsibilities of a school leader, articulating a school leader competency framework, introducing a robust and transparent process of selection of principals/head teachers and induction programme for school leaders, and providing opportunities for continuing professional development with well-defined pathways for career growth.

| Physical Education is an important | • After Assembly, every school | Section 4.12 of the national Education Policy draft |
component of growing up. Sports are increasingly being looked as an agent for change and sports for development concept is gaining popularity across the globe. UNICEF has identified crucial components for enhancing the quality of education and Sports is one of them. Sports not only polishes ones sporting skills but teaches important lessons on team work, fair play, equality, gender sensitivity etc. Physical education is a broader concept and includes sports lessons, yoga and other forms of physical activities. Physical education is not limited to playgrounds and thus students can be involved in activities that can be conducted within classrooms like some basic exercises or doing Yoga that might not require a lot of space.

The districts and the states are collecting a vast amount of data on various indicators related to the child. While ICDS collects data for children in the age group of 0-6 years, SSA collects the data for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. If a way to integrate this data is devised then this could be beneficial to a lot of people. This way the same child can be tracked and all his/her information can be used to generate targeted action plans. For example; it may be possible to

- Identify ways to integrate the data collected for children aged 0-6 years and the data collected for school going children in the age group of 6-14 years.
- Find a way to create a common database for all child related data in the age group of 0-14 years and collect relevant data according to age
- Integrate and streamline the child

must conduct ½ hr Yoga/ Physical Education class.
- In schools which don’t have open spaces, Activities should be designed to conduct within school premise.
- Sports for development are a niche area in Sport psychology which is being recommended across the globe for holistic child development. This concept uses sports as a medium to impart important life skill lessons. Sport curriculum must be designed in alignment with the concept of Sports for development to incorporate Physical Education as integral part of school life.

2016 also emphasizes on the holistic development of a child through physical education, sport, yoga and other extracurricular activities as suggested by MDEP.

- Physical education, yoga, games and sports, NCC, NSS, art education, Bal Sansad, covering local art, craft, literature and skills, and other co- scholastic activities will be made an integral part of the curriculum and daily routine in schools for the holistic development of children. Facilities for the above will be a pre-requisite to the recognition of schools.
- Funds will be earmarked by the government/ school management for all co-scholastic activities in schools.
provide help to children with learning or physical difficulties as the teachers in the schools will have advance knowledge that a child with special needs will be joining the school and this way they can plan to integrate the child better in the classroom. Having an organized access to this data will also help the policy makers and educationists at the State level make better decisions.

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<td>• Use the same child identification number from 0-6 years and 6-14 years</td>
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