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Review Article

Women in Social Structure and Employment: Anomaly from a Small Island P. V Balkis^{1*}

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Abstract

Lakshadweep is a place where women have a lot of space in their family system and society. The crime rate against women and the other gender line segregation are much low in island. This paper examined, whether this social potential is reflected in the employment of women. Author calculated all the statistical indicators of employment from unit level data provided by National Sample Survey Organisation and Periodic Labour Force Survey. This study finds, there is huge gender gap in the Lakshadweep labour market. From the time to time, demand for women employment comes from social infrastructure and public administration run by government. Lack of diversification in the employment sectors is mainly works in demand side of the labour market, whereas in supply side lack of technically skilled, vocationally trained youth failed to explore the employment opportunities from both inside and outside of the island. The large proportion of unemployed and discouraged job seekers turned unproductive and engaging in unpaid domestic duties creates a large proportion of economically dependent group in the midst of all positive social possibilities.

Keywords: Employment, Work Participation Rate, Unemployment, Gender.

JEL Classification: A2, J21, J23, J62, E240.

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INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the role of women for the development of world, specifically reduction of poverty has been getting more attention for the last few years. Though it is too late, policy makers are keen and continuously striving towards emancipation of women in every aspect. In great part it will meaningfully fuel when woman can take part in production on a large scale. The reproductive activity are no longer claims economically productive rather it is anything which is excluding a significant section by taking significant amount of her time. Employment is the main core of women empowerment. The 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goal rightly mentioned the importance "to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value" (SDG 8, target 8.5.) and "to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (SDG 5) (ILO, 2019). Despite the variability in reasons and perspectives, the poor Female Labour Force Participation is one among the barrier to actively empowering them. In 2018, the global gap in labour force participation rates between women and men was 27 percentage points: in the same year, among the

working age of women, only 48 per cent were participating in the labour market compared to 75 percent for male (ILO, 2019).

The central purpose of this article is to integrate social structure and gender in labour market of a small island economy of Lakshadweep, Lakshadweep, with its limited resources and the tyranny of distance from the mainland of Kerala is in dependency trap. While looking to the economy of island, human capital is its major backbone for development. The social structure of island is some how different from general practices, especially the status of women. The crime rate against women in island is the lowest one in India; major crimes like murder, abduction and kidnapping, suicide, dowry are zero as per National Crime Record Bureau (National Crime Record Bureau, 2019). The family system in island is Matrilineal in nature, which was the practice prevalent in coastal Kerala. It is a land with 99 percent of Muslims with high belief in traditional rituals and practices. The people live in narrow strip of land with great humanity and high degree of social capital (Balkis, 2019). After marriage woman get her husband in her house and children grow in mothers home with her family. The women helpless state in both society and family are quite common in patrilineal societies. Whereas, in island women are not confined to the domestic space only. Dupe (1993) rightly mentioned the highest position of island women in the religious discourses and their role in different functions and meeting including the settlement disputes and court proceedings. Strict socially constructed gender lining and segregations are not visible in Island. Decennial population growth rate of Lakshadweep was 17.3% in 2001 come down to 6.3 percentage points in 2011 census, i.e. a loss of 11 percentage points over 2001 (Census, 2011). The declining fertility is also somehow connecting the status of women. Literacy rate in Island is 91.85 percentage points in which 53.3

percentage are male and female it is 46.7 percentages. The vigorous discriminatory practices and sex stereotyping are largely absent in island. If these positive aspects in society respond positively in women labour market, it would be a different picture from the table 1. As per census 2011 percentage points are in workers, with the gender gap of 35 percentage points. Some questions come up in this stage is that: where they are missing? Why they are fail to reflect their positive social advantages to their economic activities? Is it because of demand or supply side issue? This article attempts to anlyse these disconnections by using available data on island.

Table 1: Work Status in Island

Category	Workers (Main workers + marginal workers)	Main Workers	Marginal Workers
Persons	29.09	16.76	12.33
Males	46.25	27.59	18.66
Females	10.96	5.32	5.64

Source: Census, 2011

Brief Background Literature

Though gender has a real-time influence on outcome, the mainstream micro and macro economics is not deciding gender as a key variable to analyse individual choice decision to maximization is because they seem gender as a social meaning to a biological division. In neo- classical economics, rational human behavior not considering his or her social constructs while taking decisions also put aside the all type of social constructs. Feminism as an intellectual discipline has great tradition in questioning the gender centric labour market. The feminist's works on institutional economics put attention in questioning the labour force participation of women, wage gap and occupational segregation and they have profound tradition in questioning androcentric bias in the mainstream treatments gender segregation in labour market (Bergmann 1986; Blau et al., 1986; Strober, 1984). Different type of gender sensitive practices like labour market legislation, inheritance law, property right all have gender role to lead women in low strata because it takes the legal and institutional structure of the economy. Though, the exact nature of these legal and conventional followings can be varying from one economy to another, they are typically pervasive enough to shape women's role in economic activity. Women are considering regular wage government jobs as safe place for their maternity benefit, and other benefit to run their reproductive work much stress less and for private is concerned their turn over cost is a matter while appointing a women worker. This may be the reason of women to concentrate in low paid and low skilled jobs. For them turn over cost is not a matter of concern.

The brief introduction which mentioned above is contrast with the wide range of literatures with patrilineal backgrounds. The women decision to participate in labour market connected with number

theoretical factors, further more social, cultural, and geographical factors also get attention in academic literature. The classical theory of Becker (1965) has stated the female labour force participation make delay in fertility (Chov. 2011) also drawn the same conclusion on the inverse relation between female labour force participation and fertility rate. Where as Kim (2014) has explained promising effect of second child birth in women labour market participation decision. Education and income effect on declining FLFP also checked by (Rangarajan et al., 2011). The 'U' shape relation of Female labour force participation and income stated by (Goldin, 1994; Fathima& Sulthana, 2009). There is evidence in the negative association of patriarchy in household, culture with women labour force participation (Walby, 1994). Some of the cross-sectional studies focused on education, family income and age of children as primary determinants of women's labor force participation (Cramer, 1980; Felmlee, 1993, Tansel, 2002). (Erdem et al., 2016) made an attempt to build a model by connecting gender share in Solow growth model.

Data and Methodology

Author use data from 61th (2004-05) and 68th (2011-12), rounds of Employment and Unemployment Survey (EUS) of National Sample Survey Organisation and Periodic Labour Force data on Employment and Unemployment Survey latest rounds 2017-18 and 2018-19. The study only considered Usual Principal Status (UPS) in the age group of 15-59 years. In some rounds subsidiary status of women is nil. That is why the study confined the usual principal activity status. Unit level data calculated in each round for the purpose of descriptive analysis. In addition, Census report of island, Ministry of shipping report and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises report use for this study.

Operationalizing Supply Side

Household is the mainspring of labour supply. Among the total households in island, 43.7 percent are female headed households meantime the national average is only 11 percent. Along with macro economic factors, propounding micro behavioral, social cultural elements works in household supply decisions. By the

positive socio-cultural indicators with high female headed households ensures better place for expansion of women in labour market. The statistical indicators like labour force participation; work participation rate and unemployment are used to analyze the supply side of island labour market.

Table-2: Labour Force Participation

Labour Force Participation							
Period	Male	Female	Gap(Men-Women)	Total			
2018-19	83.7	20.8	62.9	50			
2017-18	84.4	20.5	63.9	48.8			
2011-12	84	25.6	58.4	54.8			
2004-05	86.3	26.1	60.2	57.4			

Source: Author calculation from NSSO and PLFS Unit level Data

Labour force participation rate (LFPR) indicates the proportion of people in working and available for work among the total population. LFPR of island has decreased from 57.4 percentage points in the period of 2004-05 to 50 percentage points in the period of 2018-19. Some factors driving this overall fall in LFPR. It may because of change in the number of working age people, either change in employed or unemployed or change in both variables. While looking in to gender line analysis who is contributing more to this fall? Men participation rate has declined by 2.6 percentage points, whereas, over the same period, the fall in women participation is almost double to that of its counterpart. Roughly, more than 80 percent of men are visible in the labour market either in employment or seeking for an employment. But for women it is in between 20 to 25 percent over this period, which is one fourth of the men participation.

It is noteworthy to mention that the huge gender gap visible in the LFPR definitely has both short run and long run implication in the development path of island. The proportion to the difference in men to women is almost showing a similar trend. So in this conjunction I put forward few questions regarding LFPR of island.

- 1. Why such a large gender gap existing in island?
- 2. Why LFPR in island remains too low?
- 3. Why LFPR recording continuous fall?

Before addressing to these questions proper clarification want to make on women work participation.

Table-3: Work Participation of Island

Work Participation Rate							
Period	Male	Female	Gender Gap	Total			
			(Men-Women)				
2018-19	60.7	10.7	50	34			
2017-18	73.7	10.2	63.5	38.2			
2011-12	77.8	15.8	62	46.8			
2004-05	81.4	11.8	69.6	48			

Source: Author calculation from NSSO and PLFS Unit level Data

Work Participation Rate (WPR) indicates the percentage of people in economic activity. While calculating this we exclude numbe r of unemployed, 34 percentage points is the WPR in 2018-19, down from 48 percent points in 2004-05. Over the periods, 14 percentage points fall has been recorded in it. The major setback in WPR do necessitates an overlook to the demand and supply of island labour market. Around 20 percent points fall happened in men WPR, further narrowed the wide gender gap from 69.6 in 2004-05 to 50 percent points in 2018-19. The pattern of women WPR exhibits almost similar trend. Among the working age (15-59), around 90 percent of women are financially dependent to others. From this outset, the

fall in LFPR is an outgrowth of falling male work participation in island.

Coming in to unemployment rate, it shows the number of unemployed in total labor force of the country. Unemployment rate in island sharply rose to 32 percent points in 2018-19 from 16.4, all most doubled. The unemployment rate in island is not a crucial indicator to analyze the grim situation because the discourage job seekers, NEET category (Not in Education and in Training) all are out of the purview of this unemployment. The greatest concern is the high unemployment rate among women and alarming rise in men unemployment, both are equally disturbing the

financial stability of the island. In 2004-05, the unemployment rate among women was 54.8; it is almost ten times higher than that of men. In 2018-19, the rate moderated to 48.2 percent points. The decline in the unemployment not aggravated in employment

over the same period, see the table the work participation of women not showing increment but get reduced from 11.8 to 10.7 percent points. So the discouraged job seekers would be a matter of concern.

Table-4: Rate of Unemployment

Unemployment Rate								
Period	Male	Female	female-to-male unemployment rate ratio (Women Rate/ Men Rate in	Total				
			percentage points)					
2018-19	27.9	48.2	1.7	32				
2017-18	12.7	50.53	4.0	21.5				
2011-12	7.4	38	5.1	14.5				
2004-2005	5.6	54.8	9.8	16.4				

Source: Author calculation from NSSO and PLFS Unit level Data

So far in the discussion, the supply side of island labour marker analysed in detail. The present socio-cultural platform of island provides healthy ambience to women engagement in economic activity. Then why such a throw back to women in work happened here. The backsliding of women in education or advancement in labour market like large mechanization may cause such differences. Whereas,

the chance for tectonic shift in labour market is out of the purview of island due to its ecological fragility and the existing law not permit to setup large industries. Thus, the role of education to reinforce the gender gap needed to be analyzed. The next session is going to analyze the technical and educational attainment of the people under study.

Table-5: General Education

Education	2004-05		2011-12		2017-18		2018-19	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Secondary and Below	88.5	93.6	77.5	77.2	62.6	75.5	64.6	61.9
Higher Secondary	2.6	1.7	6.1	10.1	11.3	8.7	22.2	22.6
Diploma\Certified Courses	3.5	3.6	11	8.5	14.7	3.3	2.1	1.7
Graduates	5	0.3	2.8	2.6	4.8	9.6	10.2	7.6
Post Graduates	0.5	0.8	2.6	1	6.6	2.9	0.9	6.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Author calculation from NSSO and PLFS Unit level Data

In 2004-05, 93.6 percentage points of women in working age had the qualification of secondary and below. Meanwhile it was 88.5 percent points for male. Contemporaneously, the gap in education opened in 2004-05 period. However, in 2018-19 noticeable advancement has recorded for male and female, the women percentage points in secondary and below reduced to 64.6 for men and 61.9 percentage points for female. The next transition happened in higher secondary attainment. In 2004-05, among women 95 percent were in higher secondary and below only 5 percent were in higher education. But in 2018-19 the women in higher education increased from 5 percent points to 15 percentage points. Where as the men in higher education has increased from 9 percent points to

13 percentage points. The progress in representation of women in higher education is much better than men. The traditional male domination in higher education gradually transferred to women.

The percentage of male in graduation and post graduation was cumulatively 5.5 percent in 2004-05, 5.4 percent in 2011-12, 9.4 percent in 2017-18 and 11.1 percent in 2018-19. For female the progression is more impressing than that of male. It was too low just 1.1 percent in 2004-05, 3.6 percent 2011-12, 12.5 in 2017-18 and 13.9 percent in 2018-19. The figures in diploma certified courses reveal the setback of women in this regard.

Table 6: Technical Education

Technical Education	2004-05		2011-12		2017-18		2018-19	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
No Technical Education	94.7	97.7	90.9	94.2	82.2	94.8	93.4	97.2
Technical Degree	.3	0.0	.6	0.0	2.6	1.3	1.6	0.0
Diploma\Certified (Below Graduate)	3.8	2.1	8.3	5.6	15.3	3.9	3.8	2.2
Diploma\Certified (Above Graduate)	1.3	.3	.2	.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Author calculation from NSSO and PLFS Unit level Data

An island with great potential to human capital, the low number in technical education is definitely a matter of concern; it is high time to introspect and analyze the reality behind the poor condition of technical education. In 2004-05 97.7 percent of women were not technically educated. Both 2011-12 and 2017-18 the condition is not different. The number of women in technical education with above graduate level is very low for both men and women, it is severe for women. A summary conclusion may be gleaned from the figures in the educational attainment is that, both in technical and higher education the performance of island is far behind to the other states of

India. Despite of their geographical isolation and resulting travelling issues to the mainland, there has been great change in the general educational status of women. Whereas its reflection not been in labour market. Sex stereotyping in higher education not pronounced in island. Where as in technical and vocational courses, need to be more focused.

Where they are?

So far we have seen the majority of women are out of the labour market, the question might be there, where they are. Then what is their activity status.

Table-7: Activity Status of women in Different Educational Categories

Activity Status	Secondary and Below	Higher Secondary	Diploma/ Certified Courses	Graduate	PG and Above	Total
Male			Courses			
Working	42.6	9.4	1	6.8	.9	60.8
Unemployed	9.2	9.2	1.1	3.4	.0	22.9
In Education	9.4	3.6	0	0	0	13
Domestic Workers	1.4	0	0	0	0	1.4
Remittance and Disabled	1.9	0	0	0	0	1.9
Total	64.6	22.2	2.1	10.2	.9	100
			Female			
Working	3.5	1.8	.0	2.6	2.8	10.8
Unemployed	.8	4.6	1.5	2.6	.5	10.0
In Education	7.3	5.9	0	1.3	0	14.6
Domestic Workers	47.9	10.3	.1	1	3	62.3
Remittance and Disabled	2.3	0.0	0	0	0	2.3
Total	61.9	22.6	1.7	7.6	6.3	100

Source: Author calculated from PLFS unit level data 2018-19

As per the PLFS unit level data 2018-19, among the total male, 64.6 percentage points are in secondary and below education group. With this educational category, 42.6 percentage points (about 66% of this category) are working and 14 percent are unemployed. Out of the total male, only 2 percent engaged in domestic duties as their usual principal activity. So, in total 80 percentage points in this cohort are in labour force participation. Considering to the women in this educational group, only 5.6 percent are i.e. (3.5 percentage points) working and 1.2 percentages are in unemployed at the same time majority of 77.3 percent in this group are domestic workers. Only 6.9 percent is the labour force participation in this education group. The gender gap in work among this

educational group is almost 60 percentage points. As with higher secondary qualification, 83.7 percent of men in this educational group are in labour force participation. Whereas, among the 22.6 percentage women in higher secondary holders 1.8 percentage points which is 10.3 percent of this category are working, 45 percent are domestic workers. In total 28.3 percent are in labour force participation among higher secondary holders. In men graduates and post graduates all are in labour force participation. Among the women graduate holders 68.4 percent are in labour force. From the total graduates 34 percentage points are working women and it is 44 percent for post graduates. Accessing higher education making changes in the women labour force. There is a noticeable difference

between the trend of work participation and educational qualification between men and women.

Operationalizing Demand Side of the Island

Lakshadweep is locating in Arabian Sea at the distance of 200 to 400 kms from Kerala cost. As per census (2011), there are 10 inhabited islands with 64473 people. Limited geographical area (32 square kilometer) with scarce resources is the important stumbling blocks of the island development. The inherent restrictions of island in its size of market, insufficient resources, high transportation cost, lack of capital and skilled labour make dis-economies of scale. Because of its ecological fragility setting up of large industries are completely restricted so the transition to a market based economy is still in premature stage. Hence, lack of private sector is the main issue while looking to labour demand. The total labour demand of island comprises mainly in some sectors like fishing, education, construction, public administration, defense and health sector. Agricultural sector is one among the important sector in every economy to providing jobs. Lakshadweep is concerned; the entire area is cropped with coconut. As per Census (2011), there is no cultivators in the island because census not taking coconut cultivators as farmers. The coconut cultivation is not a full fledged activity because they are collecting coconut for a year and makes it as copra (dry coconut) early at once and then they export to mainland. If any one engages in coconut cultivation has enough time to engage in other economic activities too. Coming in to the animal husbandry lack of pasture ground increases the cost of feeding in the island. The total number cattle's in island are less in numbers. Fish and coconut are their main sources for existence and almost all small scale industries are in island connected with these two resources. Tuna canning factories, boat building yard, coir spinning are the some small scale industries in island.

As per annual reports on MSME 2021 there are 1872 MSME, among which 74 percent proprietors are male where as 26 per cent are women proprietors (MSME, 2021). Women are over-represented in informal employment like own account and contributing family work. Globally, over 42 per cent of

workers are either own-account or contributing family workers generally they defined as "vulnerable employment" (ILO, 2018a). Taking the island, in 2011 census among total workers 1.41 percentages are household industrial workers. According to the ILO, the share of women in informal employment in developing countries was 4.6 percentage points higher than that of men (when including agricultural workers) and 7.8 percentage points higher when excluding them, in the latest year with available data (ILO, 2018b). The common trend is there India including Kerala informal sector workers are high it all most 90 percent In Kerala and the large part of those from female workers. In island the employment creation in private sector is low not enough to create enough opportunities.

Except the construction and fishing, all other sectors are run by government. It is the main reason for the large concentration of regular workers in total labours. Fishing, construction, travelling services like ship and boat in island exclusively assigned for men. Fishing and allied activities are better place to women where as only 0.8 percent of women were engaged in this in 2011-12. Education and health sector is the center of women workers. In 2018-19, 52 percent are in government educational sector, 12 percent in government health sector including nurses and health professionals. In 2011-12 almost 17 percentages worked as clerk in government offices. Except social infrastructure like education, health and day to day administration, the sectors of employment creation for women in island is under great threat. The activity status of women in the age group of 2018-19 clearly shows the number of women in regular wage work (Table: 8). Code 94 indicates rentiers, pensioners, remittance recipients etc. and 95 is indicating the persons not able to work due to disabilities. 2017-18 periodic labour force survey industrial classification, among the working women 36 percent are in government education sector, it includes teachers from preprimary to higher secondary. The next highest workers in health sector 23.6 percentage point and 11.8 percentage points in public administration. Only 2.3 percent in retail sale of meat, poultry, fish and other products.

Table-8: Activity Status

Activity Status	Male	Female
Self Employed Own Account Worker	8.7	-
Regular Wage Salaried/Wage Employee	25.1	10.7
In Other Type of Work	26.9	-
Did not work But Seeking and Available for Work	22.9	10.0
Attended Educational Institution	13.0	14.6
Attended Domestic duties Only	1.4	62.3
Others (94&95)	2.0	2.3
Total	100	100

Source: Author calculation from PLFS unit level data

There are 3404 establishments were in island as per 6th economic census. In these establishments except some establishments related with agriculture, all the other establishment related with their day to day life maintenance like shops selling food stuffs, furniture, dress, some work shops, etc. Human resource and Skill requirement study highlighting some of the highly demanding sector in the island labor market. When

underlying these sectors, the works itself intrinsically demands technically qualified men. There is no stupid rule for assigning these job segregation but the enrollment of women in the technical courses were shown in table given below. It shows the gap between changing structure of labour demand and education and training.

Table-10: Highly Demanding Sectors

Port and Maritime Sector	Tourism	Construction	Fisheries
	Sector		
Boat Drivers	F&B	Bar benders	Production Assistants
	Production		
Tindale, Serang operator, Multi	F&B Services	Pilling Works	Quality Control Assistants
Skilled Employee (MSE)			
Vessel repairing staff / Mechanic	Caterer	Mason	Lab Assistants
Marine Painter	Restaurant	Steel Fixer	Supervisors in Value Added
	Cook		
Fitter maintenance - Marine, fitter	Front Office	Electricians	Fishery Products
	Staff		Manufacturing
Pipe - Marine, Welder- Marine	Drivers	Plumbers	Cold Storage Technician
Equipment	Tour Guides	Fitters	Marine Processing
			Technician
Vessel Navigator		Supervisors-Electrical	
-		Works	
General purpose rating		Supervisor-Roads &	
		Runways	
Under water welding and cutting			
Electric Art Welding			

Source: Sagarmala, Ministry of Shipping and National Skill Development Corporation

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The goal of this article is to cross check the status of women in employment with all positive social possibilities. More micro level factors override in existing literature whereas changes in opportunity structures have received less systematic attention. Large scale mechanization and industrialization or capital agglomeration are not yet climbed the economic ladder of island. In island, the neo-classical time allocation theory of labor supply may not be relevant in the sense the choice between market and non-market activities is almost irrelevant due to scare marker activities.

The critical issues in labour market line with opportunity constraints. This constraint is partly a setback of their market size and the lack of resources. But the skill gap is very crucial for women to preparing the changing labour demand. At the same time, their openness to the world labour market is essential to fix their labour issues. So far outward job migration for work is very limited especially among women. In an economy were resources are highly constrained, traditional economists demand for specialization. In island, they are specializing their small scale industries and all other activities to fish and coconut, where as the tourism sector want to specialize much more than what they have now. The women engagement in subsidiary

and allied activities related with fish and coconut is less explored in island. The large segment of women with secondary and below in education need to give more focus to change the existing livelihood of female headed households in island. Elaborating the activities of Self employment, self-help groups and MGNREGA in island want to get more activities to enable them to get work through the year. From 2004-05 to 2018-19, over 14 percentage points fall has recorded in total workers and continuous fall in women unemployment without increasing their work participation strictly point outing the large number of women discouraged job seekers who left from labour market. From the supply side immense gap in technical and vocational trained women. Their educational concentration is highly surrounded with traditional courses. To tap with the world digital market, from the secondary level education onwards more seminars and workshop want to give to familiarize new educational courses in esteemed universities around the world.

Huge communication network barriers in the island literally isolate them from the outer opportunities. Recently in 2020, central government took an initiative for government optical fiber cable connectivity; still it is not full fledged. Coming in to the demand side, apart from education and health, serious

introspection needed to diversify the labour market of island. The low participation of women in manufacturing, agricultural and allied activities want to cross check immediately. Transition in job market for women not happened in island because from the past onwards most of the job highly skewed in education, health and public administration. But this job concentration in government sector not sustainable in the long run because of financial liability in island recently, government is taking workers as part time it creates informal workers in formal sectors. As a world renowned tourist destination women empowerment can enhance through this sector. Among the total workers in 54 percentages sector, (Pololikashvili, 2019). Whereas in island women not explored the tourist sector like they can contribute more on accommodation, food services etc. To summarize, in island an overall improvement in women work can take over through occupational integration by expanding occupational spheres.

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