



# LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

DECEMBER 2018

## Sevalaya celebrates 30 years of service to society



Sevalaya's 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Report was released by Chief Guest Justice V Ramasubramanian. L to R: Paneer Selvam, Supporter - Sevalaya, Deepthy Arivunithi, Additional District Judge I, Thiruvallur, G Saraswathi, Secretary, Legal Services Authority for Thiruvallur, Sevalaya Murali, Chief Justice V Ramasubramanian, Sunder Mohan, Advocate, Madras High Court, Lakshmi Narayanan, Trustee, Sevalaya, Thomas T Abraham, Advisor, Sevalaya, A Mageswaran, Trustee, Sevalaya

Sevalaya's journey started in 1988, in the remote village of Sivanvoyil at Thiruvallur district, with just five children under a thatched roof. Fast forward to 2018, Sevalaya has branched out to six districts across Tamil Nadu and also to Puducherry.

In the process, Sevalaya has helped uplift the lives of thousands of children and provide a shelter to hundreds of aged people. To celebrate this feat, students, alumni, volunteers, employees and well-wishers of Sevalaya gathered at Kasuva campus on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2018.



Krishnaswamy, Head Warden, Sevalaya received awards for best performance and 100% attendance

The entire campus wore a festive look as Sevalaya celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with V Ramasubramanian, Honourable Judge, High Court of Hyderabad, as the Chief Guest.



52 students from the Community College at Kasuva received course completion certificates

Sevalaya's 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Report was released by Justice Ramasubramanian and the first copy was received by Sunder Mohan, Advocate, Madras High Court. In his keynote address, Justice Ramasubramanian nostalgically recalled being friends with Sevalaya Murali during their college days more than three decades ago. Talking about the importance of kindness, he said, "One can claim to be an intellectual only if he/she can empathize with the sufferings of others. Even God is always found at places where kindness exists. Once you start working for other people's well-being, you become a yogi and make history. And people who live only for themselves do not stand the test of time."



Deepthy Arivunithi, Additional District Judge I, Thiruvallur, receives the first copy of 'Vidiyal' from the Chief Guest

Along with the Annual Report, 'Vidiyal', a manuscript magazine prepared by students was also released. The Chief Guest then distributed gifts to school toppers, best performing employees and supporters of Sevalaya from its various centres. Besides, employees who have completed five years at Sevalaya were gifted one gram gold coin and employees who have completed ten years of service were given a 2 grams gold coin each.



Students from Sevalaya's Ambattur centre taking part in cultural activities



Students from Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher secondary school take part in cultural activities

# Joy of giving: *the way of life*

Dear Friends,

Yes, we are again in the last month of the year. Generally, the last week of December and first week of January are holiday time.

In India, even the second and third week of January are celebratory and the holiday mood continues, as *Sankaranthi/Pongal* is celebrated across the country. Added to this, it is the December Music Festival at Chennai, when the city hosts hundreds of traditional music and dance programs. Thousands of people from all over the world visit the city and enjoy the classical music, dance and the delicious South Indian food. All of these come together in welcoming the New Year!

But what happens to destitute children and senior citizens during this time? Don't they have a New Year? Who will help them celebrate? Who will take them

to concerts? How can our celebrations be complete without including them?

Here are few ideas to make our celebrations meaningful:

1. When we buy new clothes for Christmas, New Year or *Pongal*, can we buy some additional clothes and gift it to one or few kids and/or elders?
2. When we cut cake for Christmas, can we share few pieces with the poor kids?
3. When we go out to temples, churches or mosques, can we take few poor children, elders along with us?
4. Celebrate Christmas, New year, *Pongal* with the underprivileged children and destitute elders in an orphanage and old age home.
5. Sponsor a bunch of kids to go on one day trip to parks/ beach.
6. Sponsor day trips to temples and

churches for elders.

7. Spend your holidays in destitute homes with the underprivileged children and elders and teach them what you know – music, dance or sports.

8. If you can't spend a full day, visit them just for a few hours and sing/dance with them.

9. Take them out for concerts and let them understand the state's rich culture and tradition.

10. Share your food with them on those special occasions.

Sevalaya is a place where you can try out all the above. Come, let us celebrate together.

Wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and Happy Pongal.

Thanks and Regards

Sevalaya Murali

## Diwali celebrated with grandeur across Sevalaya's centres

Diwali, the festival of lights, was celebrated with grandeur at Sevalaya's Kasuva, Ambattur, Vadanallur and Thanjavur centres. At the Kasuva campus, Praveen Dev, APAC, AGM - HR, Fiat Chrysler, was the Chief Guest in the celebration. Praveen asked students to take up one ambition in life and work towards it. He quoted Vivekananda: "You become what you want to be". Sevalaya school students exhibited their talent by taking part in cultural events including dancing and singing. New dress and sweets were distributed to all the students and senior citizens. Villagers and parents participated in the celebrations.



Foreign volunteers celebrating at Kasuva R Veeramani, Advocate of Madras High Court, was the Chief Guest at Ambattur centre celebrations. Sharing his life experience with the students and the



Praveen Dev, Assistant General Manager, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles distributing dresses to senior citizens

alumni, he spoke about the importance of skill development for uplifting one's life. He distributed prizes to winners at games.

## Governor hosts Sevalaya's children

50 children from Sevalaya were among the 400 children from various NGOs who were invited to Raj Bhavan to celebrate Diwali with His Excellency, the Governor of Tamilnadu, Banwarilal Purohit.

Sevalaya Murali and L N Anupriya, Senior Manager, Operations, accompanied the children. The children were taken on a tour of the Raj Bhavan gardens. The Governor gave calculators and sweets as gifts for children.

"I was excited to visit the Raj Bhavan and loved the gardens there. I really enjoyed the programme."

G Ammu, Std IX



The Governor of Tamilnadu, Banwarilal Purohit interacting with students

## Taking Children's day to children at Govt hospitals (GHs)

True to Sevalaya's fifteen-year – long tradition, its Kasuva and Vadanallur Centres celebrated Children's Day with the children at Government Hospitals.



*A child admitted in Kancheepuram GH's paediatric ward takes part in the celebrations.*

At Thiruvallur GH, Sevalaya children sang and danced for the children at the paediatric ward. They also distributed fruits and biscuits to the children. Dr S Vijayaraj (Chief General Surgeon,

Thiruvallur GH), Dr T Jagadeesh Kumar, Dr K N Rajkumar, Dr K Ganapathy and few nurses in the Thiruvallur GH took part in the celebrations.

While speaking at the event, Dr S Vijayaraj suggested that parents should spend time with their children, and "introduce them to the outdoor games that we had the privilege of



*M N Rangarajan, Associate Vice President, Operations presenting memento to chief guest T Vasudevan, Retd. Chief Inspector of Industries*

playing in our childhood."

At Kasuva Centre, T Vasudevan, Retired Chief Inspector of Industries, Govt of Tamil Nadu, was the Chief Guest. Teachers sang and danced for the children and distributed sweets to them.

As Vasudevan observed: "Usually, students present cultural programme for the teachers and here we got to witness the reverse role-play."

Sevalaya Centre at Vadanallur chose Kancheepuram GH for the celebrations. R Jeeva, Deputy Director, Kancheepuram GH, was the Chief Guest in the event.

Sevalaya Murali and P Prasanna, Vice President, Operations, Sevalaya, were invited as Chief Guests at Sevapettai Government Girls Higher Secondary School and Molachoor Primary School at Kancheepuram.

## Reaching out to victims of cyclone Gaja

Gaja, the severe cyclone, hit the southern parts of Tamil Nadu on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Not prepared for the 110 kms speed heavy winds, people were dumb found when they witnessed the unimaginable damages left by the cyclone in the hours that followed.

The thatched roof of the mud huts were blown away, mud walls fell and century old trees were uprooted. Roads were blocked by the fallen trees, electricity cut off due to fallen lamp posts, water supply snapped. Hundreds of people were shifted to relief camps. Sensing the enormity of the damages, Sevalaya Thanjavur swung into action.

A Mageswaran, Trustee, Sevalaya-Thanjavur, co-ordinated with BDO office and organised distribution of more than 6,000 food packets, prepared at Sevalaya centre to the people from nearby villages. Additionally, basic needs of more than 1,000 people were met and materials including tarpaulin were provided to them. This was made possible with the co-ordination of Revenue Inspectors and Village Administrative Officers.

About 20 volunteers helped in packing food, transporting and distributing them. As the rains continue to batter the district, the relief work continues.



*Sevalaya's staff packing food for thousands affected by Gaja cyclone at Thanjavur*

## Home Management meeting at Kasuva campus



*Quarterly Home Management meeting at Sevalaya's Kasuva centre*

Home Management meeting takes place at Sevalaya every once in three

months to ensure the well-being of children staying at Sevalaya Home. The meeting for this quarter took place on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018, in which B Senthil, District Child Protection Officer (DCPO), B Dhasaradhan, Member, Child Welfare Committee, and M N Rangarajan, Associate Vice President, Sevalaya, L N Anupriya, Senior Manager of Operations, Sevalaya, hostel head wardens, hostel committee members and children representatives took part.

The DCPO officers interacted with the children and discussed in length about ensuring that the children receive the best care.



*A A Kingston, Vice President - Operations, Kasuva Centre, Sevalaya, selected as the member of Child Welfare Committee, Thiruvallur District, assuming office.*

## Partnering with L&T Infotech (LTI) in cleaning Elliots Beach



*LTI volunteers with cleaning tools and placards*

More than 200 volunteers from LTI joined hands with 100 people from Sevalaya and reached Chennai's Elliots Beach early in the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018 and undertook a major beach cleaning stride on the occasion of LTI Impact

Day. In the cleaning work that lasted more than three hours, Sevalaya Murali, past and present students of Sevalaya's Community College, volunteers from LTI and their family members took part.

While most engaged in cleaning the beach, some volunteers held placards with messages on the importance of cleanliness. This session was initiated by Sevalaya Murali, Edwin, CSR Head, LTI and S Rakesh, Associate VP, Sevalaya, and more than 200 kgs of garbage was cleared from Elliots Beach.

"We are happy to have contributed our share in keeping our surroundings clean and tidy."

*Imansoor, Volunteer, LTI*

## Eco Club Inaugurated at Kasuva Centre



*Sevalaya's student of Std VII drawing an elephant with eyes closed*

To provide an opportunity for students to learn about the pressing environmental issues, Eco Club was inaugurated at Kasuva Centre on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018, with students of Std VIII of Sevalaya.

The Eco Club meeting is set to take place once in every month to engage

the students in creative activities and discussions. The first workshop for the Eco Club was led by Raghunath Krishna, Conservation Artiste and Creative Director at Pencilsrock Academy and his wife Brinda Raghunath.

He spoke about importance of elephant conservation and the issues that pose a threat to their existence. He also spoke about the importance of *Vettiver* grass, its ability to prevent soil erosion and purify water. As it is an economically efficient method of preventing soil erosion, the club decided that creating a *Vettiver* garden will be the first activities that the children take part in.

Raghunath also conducted games with elephants as the theme and asked the students to draw an elephant on the board while wearing a blindfold. Students thoroughly enjoyed the session.

## Vegan day

The term Vegan was first coined by Donald Watson in 1944 and 1<sup>st</sup> November of every year has been celebrated as Vegan day across the globe since 1944. Joining the rest of the world, Sevalaya celebrated Vegan Day on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 at its Kasuva campus.

Serena Mohamed, a volunteer from England took up the job of educating the students about Vegan-ism. She has been working with Sevalaya for the past few months and she is a vegan herself.

After clearing common misconceptions about Vegan-ism, she spoke about how it is not just a diet but also a way of life.



*Serena about Vegan-ism*

## Heritage food festival



*Kids displaying traditional food made from millets*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018, Sevalaya's students celebrated heritage food festival in the campus. The festival aimed at reminding the children about heritage food of India and more than 140 students from Std V took part in the festival.

All the students were divided into groups and each and every one of them was given a millet name.

On that day, they all brought different kinds of home cooked food prepared using millets assigned to them, to school. They displayed their dishes for others and explained about the importance of each millet. This way, all the students got to know about the importance of many kinds of millets. After the display, the students and teachers shared their lunch with each other and had a millet feast.

A video about the fast spreading fast food culture and its ill effects was displayed to the students. The students then took a resolution to eat a dish made of any kind of millet at least thrice a week and avoid eating junk food.

## Breast Cancer Awareness programme

To mark the Breast Cancer Awareness month that falls on October every year, an awareness programme was organised by *Vasantha* Memorial Trust to Sevalaya's staff on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018.

All female staff from Sevalaya's Kasuva centre attended the awareness programme where they were taught about age groups more prone to being affected by breast cancer and the importance of early intervention.



*Awareness programme by Vasantha Memorial Trust volunteer*

## Session on ways to prevent Swine Flu



*Students listening attentively to Dr Gajalakshmi*

Swine Flu awareness programme was conducted by Dr Gajalakshmi, Director of Sevalaya's Medical Centre, to the

students on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2018. More than 1,000 students from Stds III to XII attended the programme.

The doctor advised the following precautions to be taken by the children to prevent swine flu.

- Never visit over crowded places
- Always drink boiled water
- cover the mouth while coughing
- Avoid eating outside food especially non vegetarian

In addition she advised that in case of fever and cold, people should not buy over the counter medicines but always consult a doctor.

## World Tsunami Awareness Day

World *Tsunami* Awareness Day was celebrated at Sevalaya's Kasuva campus on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

In 2015, United Nations nominated 5<sup>th</sup> November as the *Tsunami* Awareness Day. From then, for three years now, Sevalaya has been celebrating the day on 5<sup>th</sup> of November every year.

This year, it was commemorated with a presentation by Sevalaya's Social Studies teacher, Sudhakar. 100 students from Std VII attended the programme.



*Sudhakar, Social Science teacher, explaining about Tsunami*

Students were taught to identify the signs of *Tsunami* like earthquakes and animals fleeing in the direction right opposite to water. Sudhakar presented a power point showing a world map highlighting the *Tsunami* prone areas.

Further, students were advised on the steps to be taken when a *Tsunami* occurs like moving to higher grounds and listening for updates. It was an interactive session with students eagerly clarifying their doubts.

## Seed balls by BNY volunteers



21 volunteers from BNY visited the Kasuva centre on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018, and prepared more than 400 seed balls out of red soil, vermicompost and agathi seed.

## Sevalaya alumnus gives motivational speech

Sevalaya's alumnus G Ragavendran, Vice President in a Multinational Company, visited Kasuva campus on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018 to give a motivational speech to Sevalaya's students appearing for public exam in the year 2019.

Ragavendran addressed around 500 students from Stds X, XI and XII. In his speech, he spoke about giving 100% to whichever field one chooses. Such dedication will automatically result in excellence in the chosen field. He urged the students to utilize the varied opportunities available in Sevalaya.

Recalling his school days, he spoke about how he struggled to cope up in English medium initially. However, he eventually overcame those barriers to achieve great feats in school and college.



*G Ragavendran, Sevalaya's alumnus, addressing the students*

Though he had to fight against a lot of odds, what helped him at all those times were the four people he is inspired by - Bharathiyar, Gandhiji, Vivekanandhar and Sevalaya's Founder, V Muralidharan.

He also spoke about job opportunities in the government sector and how to start preparing for competitive exams from now. It was an interactive session and the students had so many questions for Ragavendran *anna*.

"The session was really useful for us and we learnt about a lot of opportunities available to us at the right time. We definitely will utilize the opportunities we get in Sevalaya and we will succeed in life.

**S Bhuvaneswari, Std X**

## Ada Hill: Teaching and learning with children a thousand miles from home

When Ada Hill, all of 18 years, decided to come to India from England, all she had were lots of stickers and basic knowledge about Sevalaya.

Three months into volunteering for Sevalaya from its Kasuva campus, she believes every day has been a learning experience.

After school, Ada signed with a charity, Project Trust, with two things in mind - wanting to gain good experience and do some good deed before joining college. With that in mind, she landed in India by September 2018. This meant having to navigate a lot of cultural, social and language barriers. But she didn't mind that because of her irrefutable belief in the children she was looking forward to working with. Talking about that, she said.

"I was going to teach English in Primary School, and hoped that children's



appreciation for stickers would be universal"

Ada has been in India for three months now and she is more than happy to be working with "well-behaved and engaged children". At the same time, she is constantly reminded of how the children would not have access to quality education, if not for Sevalaya. She finds Sevalaya's staff to be very compassionate, and admires their work towards improving the lives of rural people.

Talking about how learning at Sevalaya is a two way street, she said, "The progress that my students make motivates me to put every energy into equipping them with a second language, so that they can

be best prepared for whatever career they choose. I am so privileged to be part of the Sevalaya family."

Ada is hoping that teaching English in Sevalaya will help her in getting Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) certification, which in turn would enable her to continue teaching English overseas. She is confident that the perspective she gains in her one year at Sevalaya will go a long way in helping her pursue her dream of working for International charity.

Next year this time, Ada is counting on pursuing International Relations in a reputed institution back in England and Sevalaya team wishes her the best.

## "Processing" himself for self-actualisation...

-R Dhanasekaran

Hailing from a farming family at Keelvelur in Nagapattinam District, Dhanasekaran, cook at Sevalaya, Thanjavur has come a long way in life. A spiritual person at heart, he has read a lot of spiritual and philosophical books including works of Osho, all volumes of *Arthamulla Indhu madham* by Kannadasan and Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Nithyananda.

In his words, "I have visited many temples, done *uzhaavarappani*, (temple cleaning activities), been a member of *pradhosham* committee." He further said, "Even before I knew that *Sri Sathya Sai Baba* existed, a man with thick curly hair



Receiving best employee award during 30th Annual day celebration

appeared many times in my dreams and instructed me to 'Go cook'.

I realised much later that when Baba told me "Go Cook" in my dreams, it was not just the cooking of food but processing me for self-actualisation.

I met Mageswaran Sir (Trustee, Sevalaya) when I was at *Ramananda Ashram*. He told me about Sevalaya and asked me if I can cook. I was happy to be associated with an institution which serves the poor and the destitute and I readily agreed. So

here am I" concludes Dhanasekaran.

Ever since joining Sevalaya, he has been serving the underprivileged sincerely. For instance, it was him who cooked more than 6,000 packets of food to help the victims affected by Gaja cyclone in Thanjavur. He had the help of Assistant cook, Ramachandran during those hectic days.

To appreciate his efforts and dedication, Sevalaya gave him the 'Performance Excellence Award' in its 30th Annual day.

## Ayudha Pooja Celebration with long time donors



Two auto drivers garlanding senior citizens of Sevalaya

Pattabiram's Anna Nagar Auto Association members have been Sevalaya's donors for more than two decades. Every year, after

collecting donation for *Ayudha Pooja*, they do not spend the money on putting up banners, speakers etc. Instead, they donate it to Sevalaya to help ensure the well-being of hostellers and residents of old age home.

Continuing that ritual, on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018, they invited 15 residents of the old age home and all hostel children to visit the auto stand. There, *Ayudha Pooja* was celebrated with the auto drivers providing free lunch to all the visiting residents and a friendly interaction between them ensued.



Sevalaya Murali was the Chief Guest at Founder's day in Velammal Matriculation School, Avadi. The school donated groceries and other items to Sevalaya

## Sevalaya children at Ashram school carnival

Sevalaya's students from class V to XI had the honour of participating in a cultural programme at *Ashram School*, Chennai. Participating along with 1500 students from various schools across the city, Sevalaya's students stood out in the children carnival celebration.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018, 30 students from Sevalaya sang at *Ashram school's* children carnival. Prior to that, they were provided training by *Ashram school* and its Chairperson, Latha Rajnikanth.

On the next day, 30 more students performed three dances – two folk and one aerobic pyramid dance in the *Ashram school*. Hundreds of children from other NGOs across the city took part in the festival.

This also included children with disabilities, mentally challenged children



Sevalaya students with Latha Rajnikanth and also elders from various Old Age Homes. In the event that took place in Ramachandra Hall, the students gave a wonderful performance in front of the Chief Guest, Latha Rajnikanth, the Chairperson of the school.

"We felt very happy to receive such a big platform to exhibit our talents. we also enjoyed the programme presented by children from other NGOs."

**S Dhivya, Std X**

## Sisters break into State team



Sisters Leena and Kiruthika

V Leena from Std IX and V Kiruthika from Std X are sisters studying at Sevalaya School. They have been interested in sports and have been very good at it from their childhood. Their favorite sports have always been Handball and their

years of hard work have finally bore them fruits. They both have been selected to represent Tamil Nadu in inter state competitions.

In the first match representing Tamil Nadu, Leena will be competing against Hyderabad as Left wing, while Kiruthika will be playing against Haryana in centre back position.

"I have been competing for three years in a row now. Though I have been good at Handball, we couldn't get through. But what kept us going was our parents' unflinching hope in us and constant encouraging from our teachers at Sevalaya and sports master in particular. We would like to thank them all on this occasion."

**V Kiruthika Std X**



V Leena in practice

## Morality as a religion - M K Gandhi

Morality and religion have close relationship. There are some people who proclaim themselves as religious but indulge in all types of immoral acts. On the other hand, there are avowed atheists like Charles Bradlaugh who never deviate from principles of morality. Both these categories of people consider that religion has nothing to do with morality. Both are wrong. But the former are dangerous to society.

There are people who tread the path of morality consciously, deliberately with a determined will, regardless of gain or loss, of life or death, without turning to

look back, ready to sacrifice themselves. They can be really said to have been permeated with true morality.

Morality cannot subsist without the support of religion. Bismarck perpetrated dreadful deeds in the interest of Germany. His education and values of morality vanished in the face of difficulties. This is because his concept of morality was not grounded in religion.

Thus it will be seen that true or ideal of morality ought to include true religion. In other words, morality cannot be observed without religion.

Furthermore, it is seen that rules of morality laid down in world's great religions are largely the same.

God will not come to help us if we utter His name while having a dagger concealed under our arm.

Of two men, one who believes in the existence of God, yet breaks all His commandments; and the other, who, though not acknowledging God by name, worships Him through his deeds, and obeys His laws, recognizing the Divine Maker in His laws- the latter alone can be considered religious and moral.

## A musical night to celebrate the festival of lights

M Umadevi, Sevalaya's long time donor, arranged a musical night for Sevalaya's hostellers and residents of old age home to mark the occasion of Diwali. *Ragam Talam Pallavi*, a musical troupe visited Sevalaya's campus on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to entertain the children, destitute people and staff of Sevalaya.

The troupe sang Tamil songs – both old and new ones to, hundreds of listeners who had gathered in the auditorium. To the delight of the audience, the singers

encouraged the audience to join, by singing and dancing.

Sweets and snacks were distributed to the audience. Children were also encouraged to go up on the stage and perform. Saradha, a talented 14 year old resident from Sevalaya's Girl's home, took up the stage and sang in front of a captivated audience. Following her, another child, 11-year-old Ragesh, from the Boy's Home, also performed to much cheers from the audience.



S Saradha, Sevalaya hosteller performs on stage

## Godrej conducts training for Tally & E-Publishing students



Arun, AM, Godrej, conducting training session

On 27<sup>th</sup> October and 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018, employees from Godrej visited Sevalaya's Community College in Ambattur and trained the students.

S Naganathan, Junior Manager of Godrej visited the Ambattur campus on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018 and trained Tally & E-Publishing students on 'effective use of

Google mail' and usage of CC and BCC.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018, Arun, Assistant Manager of Godrej paid a visit to Sevalaya's Ambattur campus and taught the Tally & E- Publishing students. Both the students of current batch and Community College's alumni took part in the training session that included the MS-Powerpoint, presentation concepts, and proper way of official presentation among others.

"We learned about MS power point - creating slides, insertion of images in the slide, animation and arranging of slides. We also learnt about mail etiquettes."

**J Gayathri, Tally student**



About 200 children from various schools across Thiruvallur district formed a human chain in front of the Collector's Office on the occasion of National Child Protection Day

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