

# **Buddhist ways of life and ideas. What does it mean to follow the Buddha?**

**YEAR  
GROUP 5/6**



**Tower Hamlets Religious Education:  
Support for Schools from SACRE**

**TITLE OF UNIT: Buddhist ways of life and ideas. What does it mean to follow the Buddha?**  
**YEAR GROUP Y5/6**

**ABOUT THIS UNIT:**

This unit offers teachers of RE in Tower Hamlets primary schools the chance to introduce pupils to the Buddhist religion in a clear and straightforward way, taking account of the history, current practice and teachings of Buddhists in Britain today. It provides for pupils to learn from some Buddhist stories, particularly about the life of the Buddha, and think about ideas and concepts from Buddhism, developing their own appreciation of Buddhist life and religion.

**Estimated time for this unit (in hours)** Usually 8+ hours of teaching time

**Where this unit fits in:**

This unit will help teachers to implement the Tower Hamlets Agreed Syllabus for RE by providing opportunities to learn about local religious communities and their connections to the UK and the wider world. It provides for developing local knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist teaching through story and through thoughtful conceptual learning.

**Aims include:**

**AT1: Learning About Religions**

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of Buddhism as one of the principal religions represented in Great Britain and the associated teachings, experiences and practices
- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of some of the influences of life experiences, teachings, values and faith traditions in Buddhism upon individuals, communities, societies and cultures.

**AT2: Learning From Religions**

- Reflecting on their own beliefs, values, perceptions and experiences in the light of their study of the Buddha and Buddhist life.
- Make links between their own experiences, beliefs, celebrations, and community life and that of religious communities in Tower Hamlets
- Develop positive attitudes of respect towards other people who hold views and practice ways of life that are different from their own.

**Pupils will be enabled to:**

- Consider their own beliefs about compassion, happiness and suffering in the light of the teachings of the Buddha.
- Know and understand about Buddhism ways of life locally and beyond.
- Appreciate what the Buddha teaches about how to live life compassionately and with self awareness

**KEY STRANDS ADDRESSED BY THIS UNIT (from the syllabus)**

- knowledge and understanding of religious teachings and sources }
- knowledge and understanding of religious practices and lifestyles } AT1
- *skills of asking and responding to questions of identity and experience* }
- *skills of asking and responding to questions of truth, meaning and purpose* } AT2
- *skills of asking and responding to questions of values and commitments.* }

**ATTITUDES FOCUS**

- Respect for all
- Open-mindedness
- Appreciation and wonder.

**Issues of continuity and progression** – This unit is the initial study of Buddhism for pupils in Tower Hamlets, but it benefits where teachers are alert to all the other traditions that pupils know about, and thereby learn what is distinctive about the Buddhist path in life as well as the ways in which Buddhism is similar to other religions.

<p><b>Prior learning</b> It is helpful if pupils have had the chance to think about how religions depend upon stories, festivals, community and the inner life in guiding the lives of their followers.</p> <p>These common threads, studied earlier with reference to other traditions, should be helpful to pupils trying to make sense of Buddhism for the first time.</p>	<p><b>Vocabulary</b> In this unit, pupils will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:</p> <p><b>Buddhism:</b> The Buddha Suffering Clear thinking Enlightenment Meditation Precepts Compassion The Sangha The Dharma Nirvana</p>	<p><b>Resources</b> <b>Local Buddhism</b> The London Buddhist Centre in Roman Road, near Bethnal Green station is a focal point of Buddhist life in Tower Hamlets. The building, a converted fire station, hosts a diversity of activities ranging from school visits, meditation classes and day retreats. It is also the focal point of an expanding Buddhist 'village' that includes a restaurant, gallery, café, gift shop, arts centre, natural health centre and health food store. All these businesses are run co-operatively, reflecting Buddhist values. Teachers may find this local expression a useful teaching starting point. Note that this is a centre of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). Other varieties of Buddhism are important in children's learning as well.</p> <p><b>Texts</b> Books suitable for pupils Connections, A Libby Ahluwalia, Ann Lovelace et. al. The Buddhist Way. Steve Clarke The Buddhist Experience Mel Thompson</p> <p><b>Books for teachers</b> From the Festival Shop (<a href="http://www.festivalshop.co.uk">www.festivalshop.co.uk</a>) Looking at Religion: My Buddhist Life 21<sup>ST</sup> Century Religions: Buddhism Buddhism in Thailand, Faiths and Countries series</p> <p>What is the Dharma? Sangharakshita Developing Primary RE: Faith Stories, Special People of Faith and Action RE Today, ed. Mackley Exploring a theme in Primary RE: (edited by Joyce Mackley, from RE Today) Moving On Up from RE Today (ed. L Blaylock) Pictorial Guide to Buddhism (RE Today)</p> <p><b>Web:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.faithintowerhamlets.com">www.faithintowerhamlets.com</a> is the website of the Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum, and is an essential reference point for teachers of RE</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.lbc.org.uk">www.lbc.org.uk</a> is the website of the FWBO's London Buddhist Centre. It includes a long video, the first few minutes of which are usable with pupils in Y5/6.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.clear-vision.org">www.clear-vision.org</a> is the website of the Clear Vision Trust, a Buddhist educational resource provider. Stories, video and interactive ideas from this site are useful in this unit.</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.buddhanet.net">www.buddhanet.net</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.dharmathecat.com">www.dharmathecat.com</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.quantrum.com.my/sadhu">www.quantrum.com.my/sadhu</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion">www.bbc.co.uk/religion</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.theresite.org.uk">www.theresite.org.uk</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/schools/">www.re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/schools/</a></li> <li>▪ For downloadable artefacts pictures and line drawings: <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/SocialStudies/RE/Database/Graphics/Images">http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/SocialStudies/RE/Database/Graphics/Images</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.devon.gov.uk/dcs/re/places/index.html">http://www.devon.gov.uk/dcs/re/places/index.html</a> is a useful multi religious site for RE</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk">http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk</a></li> </ul> <p><b>DVD / Video / visual</b> Water, Moon, Candle, Tree and Sword (Channel 4 Learning) includes a programme about the Buddha. Pathways of Belief (BBC) Animated World Faiths (Channel 4 Learning, programmes 3 and 4 in the 'Quest' series) <a href="http://www.channel4.com/learning">www.channel4.com/learning</a></p> <p><b>Artefacts</b> Religious artefacts available to purchase from: Articles of Faith (Tel: 0161 763 6232) Religion in Evidence (Freephone 0800 137525)]</p>
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**Contributions to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (links directly to framework)**

The unit enables pupils to develop:

**Spiritually** by discussing and reflecting on key questions of meaning that are at the heart of the Buddha's story and teachings.

**Socially** by engaging thoughtfully with the mixed religious communities in Tower Hamlets

**Culturally** by encountering people, literature, arts and resources from local Buddhist cultures.

**EXPECTATIONS**

**At the end of this unit:**

**Nearly all pupils will be able to work at level 2:**

- use some religious words (like 'Enlightened', meditation or Nirvana) to retell a Buddhist story
- show awareness of a teaching of the Buddha
- identify some of the features of Buddhist practice or Buddhist symbols
- ask and respond to questions about their own and others' experiences about suffering, compassion and calmness.

**Most pupils will be able to work at level 3:**

- use a developing religious vocabulary to make links between Buddhist ideas and their own ideas;
- ask questions about life's meanings and purposes;
- recognise the similarities and differences between a Buddhist way of life and their own;
- describe some of the features of Buddhist practice.

**Some pupils might be able to work at level 4:**

- identify stories and teachings that help them in times of suffering or difficulty making links between aspects of their own experiences and others,
- show understanding of Buddhist stories and teachings for themselves, using Buddhist vocabulary
- describe some similarities and differences between Buddhist ways of life and other ways of life
- apply what they have learned about Buddhism to some of their own ideas about suffering and compassion, harmlessness, values or beliefs
- ask good questions of their own about the impact of religious teachings for individuals and communities.

**ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS**

This work can be assessed through tasks such as these:

- ◆ Pupils write about what Buddhists teach about the Buddha and why they do not worship him as a God. Pupils can recount some of the Buddha's teachings and provide examples of the resulting behaviour being put into practice in the lives of Buddhists. (AT1, level 3).
- ◆ Pupils can explain how the values Buddhists hold manifest in their lifestyles and relate this to the Five Moral Precepts. Discuss what they themselves think they should be committed to and refrain from and why. (AT2, level 3).
- ◆ Pupils write about the Buddhist belief in the Noble Eightfold Path and how this helps Buddhists to overcome difficulties in their lives. Pupils can understand that Buddhists use the teachings and example of the Buddha as a source for strength and meaning in their lives (AT1, level 4).
- ◆ Pupils make up a newspaper interview with a Buddhist, in which sensitive questions are posed and appropriate answers provided from a fictitious Buddhist. The interview is about 'What being a Buddhist means to me' and includes aspects of Buddhist understanding and lifestyle which have been covered in this unit of work. (AT2, level 4).

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES Pupils should learn:	TEACHING AND LEARNING Practical classroom suggestions that will enable the teacher to see how to plan lessons.	LEARNING OUTCOMES Pupils can show their learning by:	POINTS TO NOTE
<p><b>Who was Siddhartha Gautama? How did he become the Buddha?</b></p>	<p>To understand Buddhist teaching about life and its sufferings through the story of the Buddha</p> <p>To know about the story of the early life of Siddhartha Gautama, and the reasons he left his palace and luxury life.</p>	<p><b>Born a prince or princess?</b> Begin by asking pupils if they would like to have been born into a royal family. What would be the advantages? Can they think of any disadvantages?</p> <p><b>Who was Siddhartha Gautama?</b> Explore the pupils' existing knowledge of Buddhism. It is likely to be slight in many cases.</p> <p><b>The Buddha</b> Tell pupils stories of Siddhartha Gautama (the Indian prince who later became known as the Buddha) including some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ His birth</li> <li>◆ His upbringing as a prince</li> <li>◆ The story of the four sights that led to his renunciation of a luxurious prince's palace life</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the dramatic learning strategy called 'Conscience Alley' (from the literacy strategy) to explore the dilemma that Siddhartha faced: should he leave his pleasure palace to seek the truth, or accept his ignorant life of luxury? This strategy provides good learning through speaking and listening.</li> <li>▪ Pupils write a description of what they think Siddhartha's first week might have been like, having decided to leave the palace and his riches and power behind, as he heads off in the hope of finding answers to the problems of suffering and the ways life is unsatisfactory.</li> </ul>	<p>Responding sensitively to topics from Buddhism in classroom talk (L2)</p> <p>Retelling a story of the Buddha simply (L2)</p> <p>Making links between Buddhist ideas and teachings and what they think themselves (L3)</p> <p>Describing Buddhist practice, using the right words simply (L3)</p> <p>Applying ideas about the dilemma the young Siddhartha faced for themselves (L4)</p>	<p>Buddhism is a major religion, globally, with hundreds of millions of followers. In the UK there may be nearly 200 000 Buddhist people.</p> <p>Teach pupils that the Buddha is not a God, but a teacher of the truth. Buddhism does not require belief in God.</p>
<p><b>What does it mean to find enlight~enment?</b></p> <p><b>How was the Buddha enlightened?</b></p>	<p>To think about the story of the enlightenment of the Buddha and the effect this had on his life.</p> <p>To think about the idea of being 'enlightened' in life for themselves.</p>	<p><b>What happened to change the Buddha?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Tell pupils the next parts of the story of Siddhartha's years in the forest learning meditation</li> <li>◆ The Buddha's enlightenment</li> <li>◆ His teaching of the Middle Way</li> <li>◆ His death</li> </ul> <p><b>Enlightenment: what is that?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Talk with pupils about 'seeing the light' and the idea that we might all be 'in the dark'</li> <li>▪ The story of the Enlightened Chicken, a Buddhist parable, is a good starting point for this.</li> <li>▪ Pupils can consider the nature of what is real through 'philosophy for children' approaches to Buddhist story, or to questions like 'Ho do we know we are not dreaming?'</li> </ul>	<p>Describing what happened to Siddhartha when he was seated under the tree, simply (L3)</p> <p>Showing an understanding of the idea of 'enlightenment' simply, using metaphors to describe it (L4).</p>	<p>The Buddhist parable of 'the enlightened chicken' is published in one version in 'Moving On Up' from RE Today, with classroom activities to accompany the story.</p>

<p><b>How do Buddhist images symbolise the Dharma?</b></p> <p><b>What can we learn from the symbols Buddhists use when they meditate?</b></p>	<p>To understand why images of the Buddha matter in meditation</p> <p>To understand some of the symbolism and stories of the Buddha that images (rupas) express.</p>	<p><b>Images of the Buddha: what do they symbolise?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider different images of the Buddha and the symbols of teaching they use.</li> <li>▪ Look at artefacts and images to consider how the different ways of portraying the Buddha symbolise calmness, compassion, awareness or enlightenment.</li> <li>▪ Ask pupils to select images for these four concepts that work for them, whether they are Buddhist or not.</li> </ul> <p><b>Remembering the teaching of the Buddha: How do images of the Buddha help?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider the ways in which the Buddha image is used in shrines and for meditation.</li> <li>▪ An excellent way to do this is to use the thinking skills and visual memory strategy called 'maps from memory'.</li> <li>▪ Take a large image of a Buddhist vihara, temple or shrine room and put the class in teams of 4, numbered off.</li> <li>▪ Each pupil in turn can come to look at the picture for 10 seconds, then contribute to a group re-drawing of the image. Play twice round the groups.</li> <li>▪ Follow up by discussing the things pupils noticed from the activity and explain the objects, images and details of the image together.</li> </ul>	<p>Identify some symbols found in the Buddhist place of worship (L2)</p> <p>Make links between some Buddhist concepts and their own ideas by selecting images to talk about in relation to calmness, compassion, awareness, enlightenment (L3)</p> <p>Show their own understanding of the symbolism of Buddhist images using the right words (L4)</p>	<p>For a good range of images of the Buddha, see <a href="http://www.clear-vision.org">www.clear-vision.org</a></p> <p>This area of work has obvious links to the Art and Design curriculum in both technical and spiritual ways.</p>
<p><b>What do the three treasures give to the Buddhists today?</b></p> <p><b>What is the effect of following the Five Precepts of the Buddha?</b></p>	<p>To understand that Buddhists turn to the Teaching of the Buddha, one of the 3 treasures, for help and refuge.</p> <p>To know that the Three Treasures are the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings (the Dhamma) and the Buddhist community (the Sangha).</p>	<p><b>What was the Buddha's teaching (The Dhamma or Dharma)?</b></p> <p>Explore the Buddha's teaching of Five Precepts. These are not rules, but voluntary commitments (discuss the difference). They can be put positively, or negatively (discuss the difference)</p> <p><b>What difference would the 5 Precepts make to our lives?</b></p> <p>Buddhists refrain from:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Be harmless / don't kill</li> <li>◆ Live with what you have / don't take what is not given</li> <li>◆ Love, and be content / don't have sex with different people.</li> <li>◆ Speak compassionately / don't use wrong speech</li> <li>◆ Be aware / don't take drugs or alcoholic drink</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If everyone in the school / in Tower Hamlets followed each of these Precepts, what would change?</li> <li>▪ Pupils write about and illustrate examples of Buddhists keeping each of the Five Precepts. Pupils debate in pairs the reasons for having moral codes, and make up their own ideal code of five moral precepts.</li> </ul>	<p>Describe the 5 Precepts of the Buddha (L3)</p> <p>Make a link between wanting to follow the Buddha and behaving in appropriate ways (L3)</p> <p>Apply the Precepts for themselves: how would the 5 Precepts change our school or our neighbourhood? (L4)</p>	<p>The idea of a 'refuge' is a powerful and simple way of understanding Buddhism. We need a refuge from suffering ~ Buddhism offers three refuges.</p> <p>The work on the Five Precepts is followed up in a Y6 Unit for the Tower Hamlets agreed Syllabus on Buddhism, Christianity and the individual. Some teachers may leave it until then to tackle this topic.</p>

<p><b>What is the value of belonging to the Buddhist community ?</b></p>	<p>To understand the ways monks and nuns relate to the wider community in Buddhist traditions.</p>	<p><b>How does the Buddhist community help people to live well (the Sangha)?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remind pupils about the Three Jewels, and that Buddhists turn to these Three Treasures for help and refuge:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The Buddha</li> <li>◆ The Buddha's teaching (the Dhamma)</li> <li>◆ The Buddhist community (the Sangha)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Describe the significance of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha in Buddhist life (L3).</p>	<p>Of course, community life can sometimes be destructive too.</p>
<p><b>How does my community help me to be good?</b></p>	<p>To think for themselves about the importance of communities for all humanity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss who and what pupils turn to when they want help and refuge. Do they turn to different people for different kinds of help? In what way?</li> <li>▪ Explain that the Buddhist community is made up of ordained monks, nuns and priests and also of lay people, all of whom try to follow the example of the Buddha of how to live their lives, and to follow the Buddha's teaching.</li> <li>▪ Discuss with pupils what teaching or example is worthy of following, and what ideals they try to follow themselves. Where have these come from? In what ways is it easy, and in what ways is it hard to live a good life?</li> </ul> <p><b>How does the community help people to be good?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Talk about the Buddhist Vihara (temple), and if possible, look at photographs, books or video about the Vihara.</li> <li>▪ Teach pupils that there will be an image of the Buddha at the Vihara which is not worshipped but communicates tranquillity and compassion, and sets an example to Buddhists, who often meditate in the shrine room.</li> <li>▪ Discuss and consider what the advantages of trying to be good together in a community might be. Ask pupils who helps them to live well, how being in a community helps us.</li> </ul>	<p>Understand why these are called 'Jewels' or 'refuges' by Buddhists, and apply the idea for myself: my jewels, my refuges. (L4)</p>	<p>Teachers will want to handle this possibility with care, based on their knowledge of the class.</p>

<p><b>What did the Buddha teach about suffering?</b></p> <p><b>What can we learn?</b></p>	<p>To understand that the Buddhist path aims to reduce and eliminate suffering.</p> <p>To think about why suffering is bad, and what can be done to reduce or eliminate it.</p>	<p><b>Why do people suffer in life? What can help?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collect newspapers for pupils to work in pairs to find examples of suffering.</li> <li>▪ Pupils record their research in a table, recording, in brief, the suffering, and suggesting alongside reasons why they think the suffering has occurred. In a third column, pupils suggest ways in which the particular suffering could have been avoided from occurring in the first place, and a fourth column suggesting ways in which the suffering could be alleviated.</li> <li>▪ Pupils share and discuss their work.</li> <li>▪ The Buddha taught four Noble Truths: that to live is to suffer, that desire is the cause of suffering, that the end of desire will bring the end of suffering, and that the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the end of desire. This is complex material, but some pupils will make sense of it in the next lesson through the story of Kisagotami.</li> </ul>	<p>To describe different kinds of sufferings and different causes of sufferings (L3).</p> <p>To apply ideas about causes and consequences for myself (L4)</p> <p>To begin to use the right words to understand the 4 Noble Truths that the Buddha taught (L4).</p>	<p>The newspaper search could easily be done online.</p>
<p><b>What can we learn from a Buddhist story?</b></p> <p><b>What questions and ideas do we have about suffering?</b></p>	<p>To think about the sufferings of life in ways that are not frightening</p> <p>To understand the story of Kisagotami, and how it relates to the Buddha's Noble Truths</p>	<p><b>Learning from a Buddhist Story</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tell pupils the sad story of Kisagotami and the mustard seed.</li> <li>▪ She comes wailing to the Buddha with her dead child, asking for medicine. Instead of telling her of death's pains himself, he sends her to find a mustard seed from a house where there has been no suffering. She visits every house in town, and asks, but she only hears at every stop stories of suffering from all her neighbours. She comes to realise that suffering and death are part of life. Returning to the Buddha, he compassionately takes her to cremate her dead child. She is able to accept his help. Compassion and acceptance arise from awareness of the suffering of others.</li> <li>▪ Consider with pupils why this story has been retold for 2500 years, when it is so sad. How does the story show Buddhist ideas? Does it show the Four Noble Truths?</li> <li>▪ Teachers may be able to pick a suitable time to talk about death and loss with pupils. They often have many questions, and find it reassuring to talk with an adult about this most important topic that our society often hides away.</li> </ul>	<p>Describe how Kisagotami came to accept the Buddha's teaching.</p> <p>To ask and suggest answers to mysterious questions about life and death from different points of view (L4)</p>	<p>The story of Kisagotami is available in many versions. Maurice Lunch's retelling is well suited to this age group.</p> <p>The story deals with a tragedy – teachers will want to handle it sensitively.</p>

<p><b>What can we learn from our study of Buddhists and the Buddha?</b></p>	<p>To discuss and develop ideas about the Buddha and the Buddhist way of life.</p> <p>To speak and listen thoughtfully in exploring life's mysteries</p> <p>To take part in class talking activities that recap the unit and</p>	<p><b>In circle time, use some or all of these questions to explore what has been learnt from the unit.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who was Siddattha Gotama?</li> <li>▪ What did he discover on his trips out from the palace?</li> <li>▪ How did the sights he saw change him?</li> <li>▪ Why do you think people suffer?</li> <li>▪ What is life like when everyone is selfish and greedy?</li> <li>▪ What did Prince Siddattha decide to do with his life, and why?</li> <li>▪ What do you think it would be like to give up everything you have?</li> <li>▪ What do you think you would have done if you were Prince Siddattha?</li> <li>▪ If you were born into a royal family, what kind of person do you think you would be, and what would you do with that power?</li> <li>▪ Why do you think Siddattha went to the forest to learn meditation?</li> <li>▪ What do you think happened when the Buddha received enlightenment?</li> <li>▪ What do Buddhists believe about the Buddha?</li> <li>▪ Why do you think the Buddha taught the Five Precepts to his followers?</li> <li>▪ Do you think having moral ideas to live by is a good or bad idea, and why?</li> <li>▪ If you had to make up five moral rules for everyone to keep, what would they be, and why?</li> <li>▪ What do Buddhists believe are the Four Noble Truths?</li> <li>▪ What do you think about the Four Noble Truths?</li> <li>▪ Where do you turn to for help and refuge?</li> <li>▪ What group or community do you belong to, and how does it support or help you?</li> </ul>	<p>To ask and explore questions about life's mysteries.</p> <p>Pupils who can respond to some questions sensitively are working at level 2</p> <p>Pupils who can make links of their own between their lives and Buddhist ideas are working at level 3.</p> <p>Pupils who can use Buddhist terminology to show their understanding and ability to apply ideas for themselves are working at level 4.</p>	<p>RE units do not all need formal assessment, but most RE classes could do with more speaking and listening, well focused for learning. Circle time talking assessments like this one can surprise teachers with how much pupils have been thinking.</p>
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