

San He Wu De (Part III)

Cultivating the Five Internal Virtues and Right Effort

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Shanghai Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2021 Copyright

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Author

Nathan A. Wright

This is dedicated to my teacher Kai Uwe Pel who has faithfully devoted 40 years of his life to the diligent study and selfless teaching of traditional Praying Mantis Kung Fu.

Cultivating the Five Internal Virtues and Right Effort in Praying Mantis Kung Fu

1. Right Mind

2. Right Values

3. Right Effort

Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu is an ancient system of combat with deep roots in Shaolin tradition that teaches you about the mastery of violence, the mastery of skill, the mastery of learning, and most importantly the mastery of self. In this sense it is just as much a pathway towards Self-Realization as it is Self-Protection. Some people may find this hard to understand, but the true journey of the practitioner is one of life-long learning with the purpose of living a meaningful and harmonious life. The unique approach and martial skills taught in Northern Shaolin Praying Mantis Kung Fu are just the tip of the iceberg, as the student is immersed in the wisdom of traditional Chinese marital culture as passed on by the venerable masters of our style dating back more than ~400 years. Part of this knowledge is eloquently summarized in the San He Wu De or Three Harmonies Martial Values framework.

In this third and final installment on the San He Wu De, I will introduce the Five Internal Virtues (Wu Nei Xing) of Wu De, and the third precept of cultivating the Right Effort (Gong). If you did not read Part I or Part II, I suggest you go back now and preview before reading on, as it will provide you with an important foundational understanding. In part-one titled, "Three Harmonies Five Marital Values," I introduced the general philosophical framework of San He Wu De and detailed the characteristics of the first precept – the Right Mind. In part-two titled, "Martial Virtues in Praying Mantis Kung Fu," I introduced the second precept – the Right Moral Character and expounded on the Five External Values.

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Master Luo Guang Yu
罗光玉 1888-1944

“Praying Mantis kung fu has deep roots in Shaolin tradition and cultivates a profound mind-body connection. Strength comes from physical capacity and an indomitable will.”



五内行
Internal Virtues

意志	Will
忍耐	Endurance
毅力	Perseverance
恒心	Patience
勇敢	Courage

Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu

The Five Internal Values are considered internal values, or virtues of mind, because of how they help to build a strong disciplined mind, which in turn helps to regulate the emotional mind.

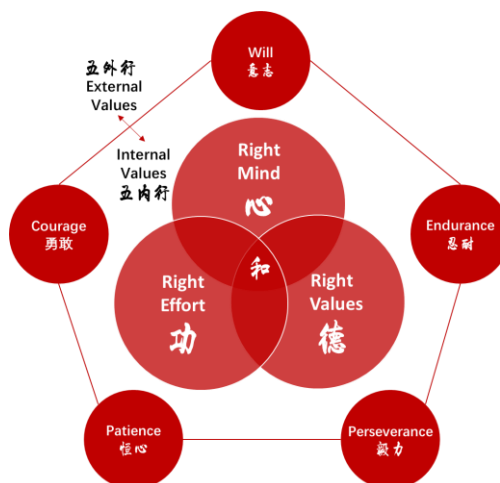
Will is about the capacity to override short term impulses, emotions, and unwanted thoughts in order to shape your future potential and achieve long term goals and objectives.

Recap - The Right Values and Wu De

Wu De is a traditional martial code of ethics in Chinese marital arts that includes Five External Values and Five Internal Values, instrumental to the proper long-term development of a student. The Five External Values include Respect, Humility, Honesty, Justice and Loyalty. They are considered external values, or virtues of deed, because of their relevance in how you interact with people in the real world.

The Five Internal Values include Will (of mind), Endurance, Perseverance, Patience, and Courage. They are considered internal values, or virtues of mind, because of how they help to build a disciplined mind, which in turn helps to regulate the emotional mind. These virtues come together in a beautifully simplistic formula that provides a practical roadmap on how to do things in life and do them well. Together the external and internal values form a harmonic Ying Yang relationship - not because they are opposite principles - but because they form interconnected, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing relationships within you and in your interactions with the external world. Understanding and embodying these values in your life will have a profound affect on the way you perceive your life and live it.

三和武德



Wu De and the Five Internal Values

Will

Praying Mantis kung fu teaches Will. Willpower is about discipline of thought, determination of action, and self-regulation. It has profound implications on your life and is ultimately about self-parenting yourself - because if you do not, no one else will. Will is about the capacity to override short term impulses, emotions, and unwanted thoughts in order to shape your future potential and achieve long-term goals. It is about running on a “cool” cognitive system of behavior (staying calm and collected) as opposed to a “hot” emotional one. Will is a limited resource, capable of being depleted and requiring re-charging, maintenance, and cognitive investment. It is the king of the five internal values, and all others are a subset of such.

“Willpower is about discipline of thought, determination of action, and self-regulation. It enables an increased ability to learn, improved ability to manage stress, and capacity to overcome adversity.”



Why is willpower important? It enables self-discipline and focus, it gives you an increased ability to learn, it improves your ability to manage stress, and it gives you capacity to overcome adversity. This translates to better health, improved confidence, more fulfilling relationships, better results in school, enhanced performance at work, deeper personal achievements, and a happier more meaningful life. The ability to develop these is at the core of what it means to be human.

You must remember that your mind is an open-learning system and that the power of your will can be trained and strengthened over time. The first part of strengthening willpower is to fuel it with good things like hard work, positivity and honesty. If you put good things into your mind and body, it will return good things with self-reinforcing behavior for more. If you put bad things into it like idleness, negativity, and deceit, it will return bad things with self-reinforcing behavior for more. The second part of strengthening willpower is the need to understand the root source of your motives and behaviors, and recognize that things like short-term emotions and impulses, self-criticism, self-depreciation, and stress will erode your willpower and lead to procrastination. The third part starts with taking action right now! All it takes is a single step to begin working towards achieving your goals and recognition that the sooner you start the better.

Praying Mantis kung fu instills as strong sense of self-discipline and willpower in you. My own teacher would always say, “the secret to better performance is control.” I always understood this in the context of tactical hand-to-hand combat, and never realized until later he was talking about “life.” In the training hall you are challenged everyday with stimulating and arduous work. Hundreds upon thousands of repetition focusing on improving conditioning, technique, application, and performance. By pushing through and overcoming the physical and mental adversity, you make incremental improvements day-by-day, week-by-week, and year-by-year. The mind-body connection is undeniable - your body becomes stronger, your mind becomes sharper, and you make an intuitive connection between discipline, work ethic, and the received benefits. Discipline and self-control in the training hall translates to self-control and discipline in your life.



The Shaolin Eighteen Luohan meditative qigong exercises cultivate a profound body, mind, and spiritual connection. The ancient practices are rooted in Shaolin tradition and were introduced by the first patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China, Bodhidharma (Da Mo).

How Traditional Kung Fu Increases Willpower

- Finding a Passion** • Following a passion in life keeps you motivated, focused, goal-oriented, engaged, and better able to manage yourself.
- Physical Exercise** • Proper exercise regimen instills discipline, increases your physical/fitness levels, and increases your confidence.
- Medication / Qigong** • The Eighteen Luohan exercises have powerful mental and physical affects on a range of skills relating to determination.
- Self Awareness** • Increased self-awareness will allow you to better understand root sources of your behavior and cognitive processes.
- Proper Diet** • Proper dietary habits and quality nutrient intake will increase brain function efficiency and strengthen willpower.
- Proper Sleep** • Quality sleep will have an exponential effect on your cognitive functions and capacity to manage yourself.

Increased Willpower
Increased capacity to better manage stress, resist impulsive behavior, override short-term emotional and unwanted thoughts, overcome adversity, and exert better self-control.



菩提达摩第二十八代

“Endurance of mind forms the cornerstone of kung fu and is the foundation of a strong work ethic. Work ethic is about the importance of effort and is manifested by a determination to do work, to do it well, and resist fatigue.”



忍耐

ENDURANCE

Endurance of mind is the main engine of work and is about having the fortitude to focus up, bear down, do the work, resist fatigue, and complete your task. It is a function of intrinsic motivation, capacity to work, and tolerance to fatigue.

Physical endurance is about the efficiency of your body's energy systems to do work and resist discomfort. It is related to aerobic capacities, anaerobic capacities, muscle strength endurance, and muscle power output levels.

Endurance

Mantis kung fu teaches endurance of mind. This is a value that forms the cornerstone of kung fu and is the foundation of a strong work ethic. Work ethic is about the importance of effort and is manifested by a determination to do work and do it well. It is the basis for all learning and achievement in life. Endurance of mind is the main engine of work and is about having the fortitude to focus up, bear down, do the work, resist the fatigue, and complete your task. It is a function of intrinsic motivation, your mental/physical capacities, and your tolerance levels to fatigue and discomfort.

Why is endurance important? The secret to success in life about your ability to do work and do it well – internally this is all about efficiency of learning. The ability to “do work” and push yourself elicits an adaptation effect in the human mind/body, and is the catalyst to learning, growth, and development. Endurance is relevant to shaping your future potential and is about achieving goals in your studies, career, personal interests, and relationships. It is what gives your life meaning and is important when it comes to coping with the negative pressures of life.

Endurance is psychological. It is about mental fortitude and the ability to engage cognitive functions efficiently while resisting fatigue and duress. Cognitive functions include things like concentration, critical thinking, logical reasoning, problem solving, planning, decision making, perception, motor skills, visual / auditory / spatial processing, creativity, and ultimately self-control. Praying Mantis kung fu has deep roots in Shaolin tradition and promotes a holistic mind-body connection. Strong psychological endurance regulates physical endurance.

Endurance is physical. It is about the efficiency of your body's energy systems to do work over time (rate of work) and resist fatigue. It is related to aerobic capacities / VO2 max, anaerobic capacities / lactate acid thresholds, muscle strength endurance, and muscle power output levels. In a bigger perspective it is also about the ability to slow disease and slow aging. The power of physical endurance is important but is finite in comparison to the power of the mind which is boundless.

Endurance is emotional. A subset of psychological endurance, emotional endurance is about your capacity to endure conditions of emotional distress (real or perceived), to manage those negative stress reactions, and to maintain normal levels of daily activity. Emotional distress can arise from everyday external pressures of life, however, more severe negative shocks like sickness, death, financial distress, bad relationships, abuse, ACE's, and injustices can put immense pressures on you and overload your emotional capacity to cope. Multiple shocks can be devastating.

In the context of emotional distress, Mantis kung fu gives you a critical outlet to coping with and managing distress. The benefits of physical exercise, meditative practices, and the development of a strong mind-body connection can help you to feel, reduce stress, build health (mental and physical), and recharge your emotional battery. Feeling better about yourself with increased health and confidence levels will help you to regulate your emotional mind and enable you to focus your energies on more productive problem solving. Ultimately this is about re-learning to be human.

“All forms of learning and mastery requires perseverance. Without it, you would halt all of your cognitive, physical, and psycho-social development, and there would be no progress.”



Perseverance

Praying Mantis kung fu teaches perseverance. Perseverance of mind is about a continuous drive to improve your skills, better your performance, and reach your goals through persistent effort. Fueled by passion and motivation, it is a form of goal-orientation that requires a long-term awareness, commitment, and discipline. In the face of challenges, adversity, monotony, and failure, perseverance is about the ability to “get out of bed the next day” and do it again, day-over-day, week-over-week, year-over-year. It is perseverance plus endurance (work ethic) that speaks to the essence of what kung fu means – skill and effort over time.

Crucially, all forms of learning and mastery requires perseverance. Without it, it you would halt all of your cognitive, physical, and psycho-social development, and there would be no progress. If you did not persist with your efforts to walk, speak, ride a bike, study in school, practice kung fu, or overcome anxieties or beliefs that hold you back, you would remain stuck. Many people falsely believe that natural talent is a core driver of success, but this is wrong. Perseverance together with endurance is the single most important indicator of future performance and achievement.

Resilience is a subset of perseverance. It denotes your ability to recover from difficulties and to pick yourself up after you have encountered adversity. The more resilient you are the faster you can manage to return to a formerly resourceful state. Perseverant and resilient people deal more productively with failure, and rather than being discouraged or embarrassed by it, they see it as a learning opportunity to try again. This is an important characteristic of a growth mindset as apposed to fixed mindset. You can refer to my past article titled, “Three Harmonies and Martial Values” where I introduce the importance of attitude and cultivating the Right Mind which includes having a growth mindset.

Perseverance and endurance form a Yin Yang relationship and are both intimately interconnected in the context of learning and skill building. If metaphorically speaking, endurance is the “father” of learning, then perseverance is the “mother” as it gives creation and re-birth into the learning cycle. Without each other there would be no meaningful learning and growth.

Patience

Mantis kung fu teaches patience. Patience is about the ability to stay calm and remain focused on the task at hand. Patience is a real time reflection of your thoughts, emotions, and awareness about yourself and the external environment. It is relevant to your interpersonal relationships, in dealing with life’s daily hardships, and in working towards achieving your goals. It requires aspects of respect and humility, and requires having a realistic and honest view of yourself and your world. Patience is an acceptance of non-control and an exercise of self-control – an important distinction and indicator of how well you can handle life when things don’t go smooth.

Why is patience important? First you must understand the emotional mind manifests impatience in the form of restlessness, annoyance, frustration, or even anger when confronted with a gap between your expected outcome and the reality of the situation. Feelings of frustration can put you under stress and cause you to worry and lose focus. It can cause you to make unnecessary mistakes, make poor decisions, and even miss opportunities affecting your ability to reach your goals.

正 义

PERSEVERANCE

Endurance & Perseverance
in Learning and Skill Building



恒 心

PAITIENCE

“Courage is about active decision-making and taking material action in the face of anxiety and fear. It is positive, it is productive, and it takes you one step closer to your goals. The absence of it leads to procrastination.”



勇敢

COURAGE

Procrastination is the action of delaying action. It makes easy things hard and hard things harder. It is associated with anticipated or imagined fears of hard work, failure, losing, rejection, criticism, self-reflection, or just doing things outside of your comfort zone.

Understanding the bottleneck caused by impatience should seem obvious, but it can be an elusive concept to understand and an even more difficult one to exercise. You must understand that the ability to exercise patience gives you: 1) long term perspective that helps in life planning and critical decision making, 2) the right state of mind to remain focused and perform your tasks efficiently, 3) the ability to better manage expectations (of yourself and of other people), and 4) the flexibility necessary to better cope with life's complexities while enabling you to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

Courage

Mantis teaches you Courage. Courage of mind is both a noble and profound value that permeates every aspect of your life. Courage is about decision-making and taking material action in the face of anxiety and fear. It is positive, it is productive, and it takes you one step closer to achieving your goals. Anxiety and fear are short-term emotional responses to events (real or imagined) that trigger pattern behaviors like fight or flight response (and associated adrenaline dump) or procrastination (inaction). Courage is a function of your attitude and value system, and like anything it can be learned and strengthened.

Procrastination is the action of delaying action or postponing something. It makes easy things hard and hard things harder. It is most often associated with anticipated or imagined fears of outcomes that are commonly associated with things like fear of hard work, failure, losing, rejection, criticism, not living up to expectations, engagement in social relationships, self-reflection, facing the unknown, breaking engrained habits, and just doing things outside of your comfort zone. The emotional mind can be lazy and short sighted viewing the reward of inaction an easier alternative to doing the work. It can result in missed opportunities and feelings of dissatisfaction and emptiness.

Why is courage important? Courage is the precursor to learning and human development. Without it, you would halt all your cognitive, physical, and psycho-social development, and there would be no learning and no progress. Courage is important because it is about staying true to you, true to your passions, and true to your own path despite the difficulties of societal / peer pressures and judgment. Courage is also important in the context of preserving social justice, speaking truth to power, and having the conviction to do the right thing in the face of injustices, inequalities, inequities, and abuses. Courage gives meaning and purpose.

Praying Mantis kung fu doesn't just teach about courage, it helps you build courage. You learn to embrace hard work, challenges, adversity and failure. You learn to try new things, you learn to follow your passion, you learn about your own strengths and weaknesses, you learn about being honest with yourself, you learn about humility, you learn about the value of a good attitude, you learn that rejection is ok, you learn that failure is a part of learning, you learn about the value of "taking action", you learn to face your fears, you learn about the giving up control, you learn about visualization, you learn to make new friends, and you build confidence. All of these are habit forming and build courage.

"All the good intentions and planning are nullified without the right effort of action. Action without effort is a form of injustice done unto yourself because you are not giving yourself the chance you deserve to live an extraordinary life."



The Third Precept – The Right Effort

The third and final precept espoused in the San He Wu De framework is the need to cultivate the Right Effort. The Right Effort is the physical manifestation of your Attitudes, Values, Goals, and Decision Making culminated in action. It is all about whole-hearted commitment and execution with nothing less than 100% effort. Characteristics of the Right Effort includes effort of attitude, effort of values, effort of direction, effort of intensity, effort of frequency, and effort of duration.

It is important to remember that a good attitude and good values are an important starting point but are meaningless if you do not take action with 100% intent. A lack of effort is almost like a form of injustice done unto yourself because you are not giving yourself the chance you deserve to shape your future live an extraordinary life. In your mind and in your heart you will know that you are not putting in the full effort and this will result in dissatisfaction and in the long run resentment. Without proper effort you will remain the same person you are today, and you will not become a better future version of yourself.

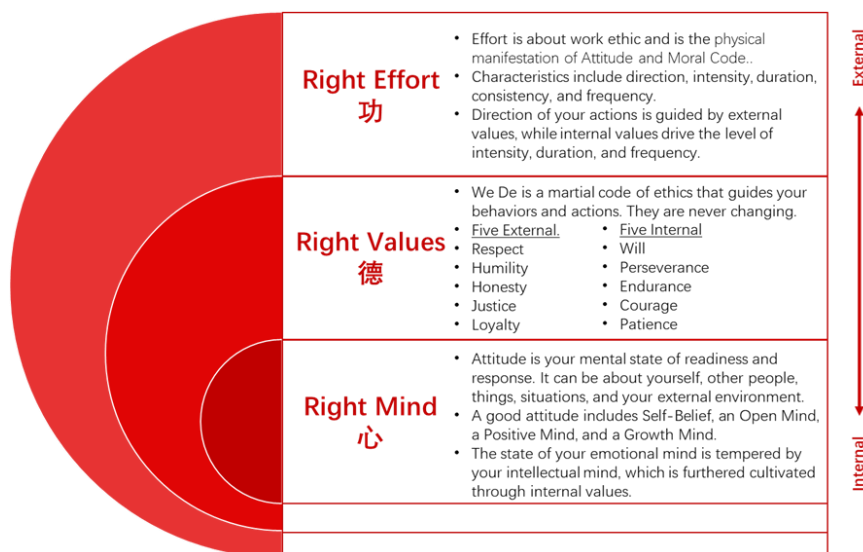
Effort of Attitude

Effort of Attitude is about doing your absolute best to embody the qualities of self-belief, positivity, an open mindset, and a growth mindset. It represents your overall outlook on life, and dictates how you respond to the world, to yourself, and to other people. The right attitude is an optimum mental state of readiness for taking information in, synthesizing, rationally analyzing, and making unbiased best fit decisions. Effort of attitude will enable you to overcome challenges and hardships and bring you closer to achieving your goals.



The Right Effort is the physical manifestation of your Attitudes, Values, Goals, and Decision Making culminated in action. It is all about execution with whole-hearted commitment and nothing less than 100% effort.

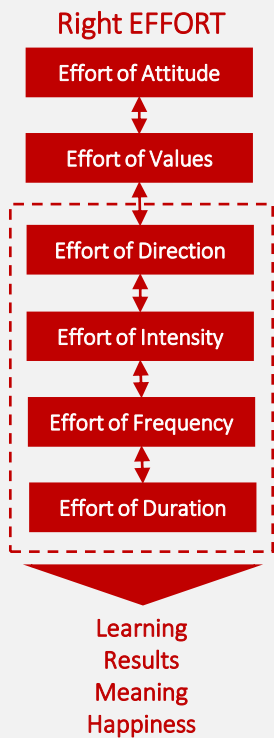
Three Harmonies Five Martial Values



“Effort of direction is about goal setting and decision making. It determines your purpose and direction in life and is a powerful process for envisioning your ideal future and turning it into reality. Planning and execution requires focus, effort, and discipline to stick with the plan.”



The ability to work hard and to stick with something consistently over the long-run is the single most important contributor to shaping your future potential. Intensity, frequency, and duration are important strategic components of proper planning, programming and execution.



Effort of Values

Effort of Values is about being mindful of the way you want to lead your life and embodying your core values and beliefs to the fullest. Values set your priorities in life and help you navigate the journey onto becoming the best version of you. External values of Respect, Humility, Honesty, Justice, and Loyalty are virtues of deed, and guide your interactions with the external world. Internal values of Will, Perseverance, Endurance, Patience and Courage are virtues of mind, and are important to self discipline, self regulation, decision making, and execution of life plan.

Effort of Direction

Effort of Direction is about goal setting and decision making. It determines your purpose and direction in life. Goal setting and planning is a powerful process for thinking about your ideal future and for motivating yourself to turn vision into reality. The process of setting goals helps you choose where you want to go in life. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know where you to concentrate your efforts. Decision making is the day-to-day execution of your plans. Be diligent in your decision making and be mindful of the five internal values. Don't let your emotional mind mislead you with short-term impulses and anxieties that can lead to procrastination. Make decisions with your best effort and stick to the plan.

Effort of Intensity

Effort of Intensity is about hard work, focus, and putting your best effort into everything you do. It is about mindful diligent action with a long-term goal-oriented awareness. The secret to success in life lies in your ability to do work and do it well – this is a function of a strong mind and cognitive learning efficiencies. The ability to Do Work elicits an adaptation effect in the human brain/body, that is a catalyst for learning, growth, and development. Anything less than 100% effort and you are effectively limiting your long-term upside potential. Act with your best effort.

Effort of Frequency and Duration

Effort of Frequency and Duration is about perseverance over the long-run. Effort of frequency is about consistency and putting in the necessary working sessions on a weekly basis to elicit adaptation, learning, and growth. Effort of Duration is a continuation extended over the medium and long-term (monthly, quarterly, yearly) which is critical to achieving long-term goals in life. The ability to work hard and to stick with something consistently over the long-run is the single most important contributor to shaping your future upside potential. Intensity, frequency, and duration are important strategic components of proper planning, programming and execution. Have long-term vision, be consistent, be resilient, and persevere.

Concluding Remarks

This concludes my three-part series on the San He Wu De framework. I hope it has been informative and provided you with better understanding into some of the important cultural and philosophical aspects behind Praying Mantis kung fu. I also hope you can take away new insights into your own life and put into practice some of the invaluable principles of San He Wu De. Be kind, be smart, train hard!

Nathan A. Wright
Chief Instructor, China
Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu

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Seven Star Praying Mantis

with Chan Buddhist meditation and Neo-Confucian philosophy. It is considered the apex of traditional Chinese martial arts providing a development pathway of self-protection and self-cultivation. As a self-defence system it integrates practical empty-hand and weapons techniques (including kicking, striking, grappling, and throwing) organized by a governing body of knowledge (in the form of combat strategy, theory, and principles) and implemented through an arduous training regimen that develops applied self-defence skills, improved physical fitness, and enhanced cognitive abilities. Visit our website at www.luoguangyu.com to learn more and read our extensive list of publications on martial practice and philosophy of thought.

A Typical Class

A typical class in our Northern Praying Mantis Kung Fu system covers a wide range of exercises, skills, and drills. You will learn traditional fighting techniques, application of 12 Keyword principles, physical conditioning, tactical theory, and traditional forms and weapons. These practices have been passed down for hundreds of years, and we continue to strictly adhere to and promote our rich history of combat practices and traditions.

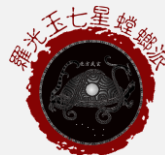
Contact Us: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu Club

China

Nathan Wright
Chief Instructor
nwright@luoguangyu.com
www.luoguangyu.com
Facebook @LuoGuangYu

New Zealand

Cameron Hirst
Chief Instructor
nz.7star@gmail.com



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