

BAIL SLIP

V.Ramachandran, (Sole Accused), Male, aged about Nil/2015 years is released on bail vide Court Order dated 18.12.2015 made in MP(MD)No.1 of 2015 in CRL A(MD)No.367 of 2015.

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

RESERVED ON : 08.11.2019

PRONOUNCED ON : 07.02.2020

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE B.PUGALENDHI

Crl.A(MD)No.367 of 2015

V.Ramachandran ... Appellant/Accused

Vs.

State through
the Inspector of Police,
Vigilance and Anticorruption,
Sivagangai.

...Respondent/Complainant

Prayer: Criminal Appeal filed under Section 374(2) of Criminal Procedure Code to call for the records and judgment dated 04.12.2015 passed in Spl.C.C.No.2 of 2014 on the file of the Special Judge for Prevention of Corruption Act Cases, Sivagangai.

For Appellant : Mr.G.Prabhu Rajadurai

For Respondent : Mr.K.K.Ramakrishnan,
Additional Public Prosecutor

J U D G M E N T

The appeal is arising out of the conviction and sentence imposed by the Special Court for trial of cases under Prevention of Corruption Act, Sivagangai in Spl.C.C.No.2 of 2014. By order dated 04.12.2015, the trial Court found the appellant guilty for the offence punishable under Sections 7 and 13(2) r/w 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and convicted and sentenced him to undergo three year rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs.1000/- and in default of payment of fine, to undergo rigorous imprisonment for six months. The appellant was also found guilty for the offence punishable under Section 13(2) r/w 13 (1) (d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and convicted and sentenced to undergo three years rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs.1000/- and in default of payment to undergo simple imprisonment for one month and the above said sentences are ordered to run concurrently.

2.The case of the prosecution in brief is as follows:

(i)The *defacto* complainant [PW2] namely S.Visuvasam is a resident of Padathanpatti Village, Sivagangai District. His father one Sandhiyagu purchased a land to extent of 2.5 Acres from one Anthony alias Anthony Muthu in the year 1984. On instigation of one Innasimuthu, in the year 1994 the said Anthony sent complaint to the Chief Minister's Cell, as if, PW2's father had purchased the said land by cheating him and at that time itself, enquiry was conducted.



(ii) On 04.02.1999, the appellant/accused officer, namely, V.Ramachandran, being the Village Administrative Officer of S.R.Pattinam Group Village visited the land of PW2. On enquiry with the accused officer by PW2, he replied PW2 that the Tahsildar received a complaint that the land has been purchased by cheating one Anthony by PW2's father. The accused officer further asked PW2 to meet him in his house, to solve the issue amicably and to close the complaint. But, due to some other works, PW2 did not meet the accused officer for a week.

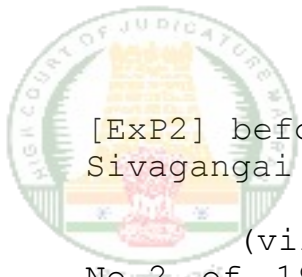
(iii) The accused officer on 12.02.1999, went to the house of PW2 and he was not available in his house at that time. The accused officer on getting information, met PW2 at his friend's shop and asked him why PW2 did not meet him and further told him to solve the issue amicably by meeting the Tahsildar, if not, he had to face the consequences, for which PW2 asked the accused officer, the complaint has been closed in the year 1994 itself and why the enquiry is being conducted. The accused officer told him that the complaint is still pending with the Tahsildar and on his direction only he is conducting the enquiry and if PW2 had trusted the accused officer, he would do the needful, for which PW2 asked to do so.

(iv) The accused officer demanded Rs.5,000/- to solve the issue amicably. When PW2 expressed his inability to meet the accused officer's demand, the accused officer replied him without money the issue cannot be solved and he had to face the consequences. PW2 left the place by saying that he would meet the accused officer later. However, he evaded meeting the accused officer for few days. Again on 21.02.1999, the accused officer visited PW2's house. At that time his brother's wife was there. The accused officer asked him to arrange the demanded money of Rs.5,000/- by him and to solve the issue, or else, he would give a report against PW2. Afraid of the saying of the accused officer, PW2 met the accused officer on 22.02.1999, around 8.00am in his house at Karaikudi and the accused officer asked him, whether he had brought the money as demanded. PW2 replied that he could not mobilise such a huge amount. The accused officer replied that if PW2 does not pay the amount within the next day, he would recommend the Thashildar to take action against PW2.

(v) Even PW2 pleaded that he could not mobilise Rs.5,000/- immediately, for which, the accused officer asked him to pay Rs.1,000/- initially and to pay the remaining amount of Rs.4,000/-, on production of the accused officer's report, before it is sent. The accused officer further asked if PW2 does not pay Rs.1,000/- before 9.00am on 23.02.1999, he would ask the Tahsildar to recommend action against PW2 and he has to face the consequences.

(vi) Unwilling to pay the bribe amount and getting afraid of the threat exerted by the accused officer, PW2 lodged a complaint

<https://hcservices.ecourts.gov.in/hcservices/>



[ExP2] before the Inspector of Police, Vigilance and Anticorruption, Sivagangai on 22.02.1999 at about 5.00pm.

(vii) Based on the complaint lodged by PW2 a case in Crime No.2 of 1999 was registered by the Inspector of Police, V& AC, Sivagangai [PW13]/ Trap Laying Officer [TLO] against the accused officer for the offence under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the FIR is marked as Exp10. On his request one Natarajan, Assistant from the Office of the District Registrar, Sivagangai and one Maharajan[PW3], Assistant from the Office of the District Elementary Educational Officer, Sivagangai were present in his office to stand as shadow witnesses. TLO introduced the shadow witnesses to PW2 and handed over a copy FIR to them to know the details of the complaint. Then TLO conducted a demonstration about the phenolphthalein test and about the trap. Thereafter, the TLO obtained Rs.1,000/-[MO1 series Rs.100 X 10], which was intended to be given to the accused officer and the serial number of the currencies were noted in an entrustment mahazar [Exp4]. PW2 and the Police party attested the same. Later the Police party coated the currencies with phenolphthalein powder and gave them to PW2. The TLO instructed PW2 to meet the accused officer on 23.02.1999 at about 7.00am and if the accused officer demands the money, then only he should give the money to the accused officer. PW3 was also directed by the TLO to accompany PW2 and the TLO instructed them to show signal, after the accused officer received the money.

(viii) Accordingly, on 23.02.1999, PW2 along with PW3 went to the house of the accused officer at about 7.00am, wherein, the wife of the accused officer told them that the accused officer went to his office and he would return only at 2.30pm for lunch. Therefore, they left the place and went to the police Station. Again at 2.30pm, they went to the house of the accused officer and met him. The accused officer had a chat with them and at that time Anthony came there. The accused officer had taken the said Anthony to a nearby building, conversed with him and sent him. When PW2 asked him to solve the issue, the accused officer told him that if PW2 gives the money demanded, he would solve the issue. PW2 told him that he had brought Rs.1,000/- as demanded him. The accused officer asked to give him that Rs.1,000/- and to give the balance amount of Rs.4,000/- on showing the report to be sent to CM Cell. Accordingly, PW2 gave the phenolphthalein coated money to the accused officer, who in turn, received the money, kept in his dhoti by folding it. Thereafter, PW2 along with PW3 came out and PW2 showed the pre arranged signal.

(ix) Then TLO asked PW2 as to what happened and PW2 explained. Thereafter, the TLO along with his team went inside the house of the accused officer, the official witnesses identified the accused officer and the TLO introduced himself to the accused officer.



(x) Two sodium carbonate solutions were prepared in two glass tumblers by the Head Constable and fingers of both hands of the accused officer were dipped into them and on immersion, both solutions turned into pink in colour. They were sealed, recovered and marked as MO2 and MO3 respectively. When the accused officer was questioned about the receipt of the bribe money, the accused officer admitted the receipt of bribe money from PW2 and in his presence, PW2 narrated the occurrence. Then TLO asked the accused officer about the bribe money, he took the money from his dhoti folding, and there were Rs.100 x 10 = Rs.1,000/- and the serial numbers of the currencies tallied with the serial numbers noted in the entrustment mahazar. Subsequently, the particular part of the dhoti worn by accused officer was subjected to phenolphthalein test and the solution turned into pink in colour. The solution was preserved in a sealed bottle [MO4]. The dhoti was marked as [MO5].

(xi) Subsequently, TLO recovered some documents relating to the complaint given by the said Anthony against the complainant. The accused officer was arrested around 06.00 hours and he prepared an observation mahazar [Exp5] and a rough sketch [Exp21]. With an advance intimation [Exp22] to the concerned Judicial Magistrate concerned, the house of the accused officer was searched and he recovered three documents produced by the accused officer under Exp11. Thereafter, the accused officer was remanded to judicial custody and TLO placed the matter for further investigation before the Inspector of Police.

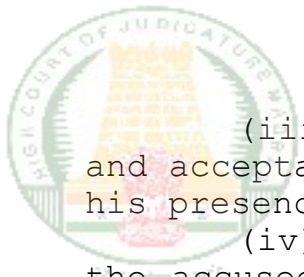
3. PW17 the Inspector of Police took the investigation in this case. He recorded the statements of the witnesses and obtained chemical analysis report [Exp9]. After completion of the investigation, he filed a final report as against the accused officer on 22.11.2011 for the offence under Sections 7 and 13(2) r/w 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 before the Special Court for trial of Cases under Prevention of Corruption Act, Sivagangai and the same was taken on file in Spl.C.C.No.02 of 2014.

4. During trial On the side of the prosecution seventeen witnesses were examined, sixty three documents were marked and five material objects produced.

5. The available prosecution evidence are as follows:

(i) PW1 is the then Revenue Divisional Officer, Devakottai and he has accorded sanction [Exp1] on 23.08.2001 for prosecuting the appellant.

(ii) PW2 is the defacto complainant and he speaks about the accused officer meeting him on various occasions, demanding bribe for issuing report in his favour, and lodging of complaint [Exp2] before the Vigilance and Anticorruption Wing, Sivagangai and the acceptance of bribe money by the accused officer in the presence of official witness.



(iii) PW3 is a shadow witness and he speaks about the demand and acceptance of the bribe money by the accused officer from PW2 in his presence.

(iv) PW4 is the wife of PW2's brother and she speaks about the accused officer visiting their house and demanding Rs.5,000/- for issuing favourable report.

(v) PW5 is the attester to the sale deed executed in favour of the PW2 father in respect the disputed land.

(vi) PW6 is the then Assistant at the Office of the Thasildar, Karaikudi and he speaks about the reports called for from RDO and VAO concerned in respect of PW2's land, pursuant to the receipt of the complaint in their office.

(vii) PW7 is the then Special Deputy Tahsildar (Elcot), Karaikudi and he also speaks about the reports called for from the RDO and VAO concerned in respect of PW2's land.

(viii) PW8 is the then Tahsildar, Karaikudi and he speaks about the report called for by DRO from the Thasildar, Karaikudi and in pursuance of the same reports have been called for from RDO and VAO concerned.

(xi) PW9 is the then Head Quarters Deputy Tahsildar, Karaikudi and he speaks about the recording of statement from Anthony Muthu.

(x) PW10 is the then Special Tahsildar (AdiDravidar Welfare), Devakottai and he speaks about the letter received from the Tahsildar, Karaikudi.

(xi) PW11 is the friend of PW2, who was running a tire shop and he speaks about the accused officer visiting his shop and meeting PW2.

(xii) PW12 is the then Scientific Officer at Forensic Science Department, Chennai, he speaks about the presence of phenolphthalein in the MOs and also issuance of Chemical Analysis Report [Exp9].

(xiii) PW13 is the then Inspector of Police, Vigilance and Anticorruption Wing, Karaikudi and he speaks about the complaint lodged by PW2, registration of FIR in Crime No.2 of 1999, summoning of official witnesses, preparation of entrustment mahazar, demonstration of phenolphthalein test, the trap laid by him and the preparation of observation mahazar, rough sketch, recovery of bribe money from the accused officer, recovery mahazar and the arrest of the appellant.

(Xiv) PW14 is the Investigating Officer, who conducted the investigation and filed a final report.

6.After completion of the prosecution side evidence, the incriminating circumstances were put before the appellant and the same was denied as false. On the side of the appellant/accused officer, one witness was examined and one exhibit was marked.

7.The trial Court, after completion of the trial, found the appellant guilty, convicted and sentenced as stated supra. As against the conviction and sentence, the appellant has preferred the present appeal.



8. Heard the learned Counsel for the appellant and the learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the State and perused the materials placed on record.

9. The learned Counsel for the appellant has raised the following grounds:

i. The sanctioning authority, without application of mind, has accorded sanction mechanically without perusing the statements and documents.

ii. The prosecution has not proved the demand of illegal gratification by the appellant.

iii. The evidence of PW2, PW4 and PW11 cannot be relied upon, since they are interested witnesses and there are contradictions among their evidence. There are contradiction between the evidence of PW2 and PW3.

iv. The prosecution has not examined one Subbaiah alleged to have been with Manickam [PW11] friend of PW2, A. Natarajan official witness and Santhiyagu father of PW2. It is a failure on the part of the investigation to examine the above material witnesses.

v. There is no independent witness to corroborate the statement of PW2 that on 12.02.1999 and 22.02.1999 the accused demanded Rs.5,000/-.

vi. According to PW1, the appellant had to give only 10(1) Adangal, chitta, patta and other details in respect of the lands, which have already been furnished by the appellant on 21.09.1999 to the Tahsildar.

vii. The accused received the sum of Rs.1000/- towards kist from PW2 for his lands and it is not the bribe money as projected by the prosecution and receipts were also given to Thalayari and the receipt book with the counterfoil was in the office. DW1 clearly stated that when he took charge on 24.02.1999, he found the counterfoil under receipt Nos.753420 to 753426 in the name of PW1 and his family members for a sum of Rs.1,011.

viii. The learned Counsel for the appellant relied on the following judgments in support of his case.

1. Gulam Mahmood A. Malek Vs State of Gujarat, reported in 1981 SCC (Cri) 586.

2. C.B.I Vs Ashok Kumar Agarwal, reported in AIR 2014, SC 827.

3. P. Palraj Vs State, represented by Inspector of Police, Vigilance and Anticorruption Wing, Thoothukudi, reported in 2012 (3) MWN (Cr) 380.

4. T.M. Shanmugavelu and Another Vs State, Inspector of Police, Vigilance and AnotiCorruption, Coimbatore, reported in (2011) 3 MLJ (Crl).

5. Som Parkash Vs State of Punjab, reported in 1992 SCC (Cri) 290.

6. A. Periyasamy Vs State by Inspector of Police, Vigilance and Anticorruption, Salem, reported in (2015) 1 MLJ (Crl) 685



7.K.Sivanandam Vs State represented by the Inspector of Police, Central Bureau of Investigation and Anticorruption Branch, Chennai, reported in (2007) 1 MLJ (Crl) 269

10.Per contra, the learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the State submitted that the prosecution has proved the demand of illegal gratification by the appellant through defacto complainant [PW2], Amala[PW4], Manickam [PW11] friend of PW2, the official witness [PW3] and TLO [PW13]. It is to be noted that the trial Court observed that PW2 was examined before the Court on 14.10.2003 and PW4 was examined on 26.06.2008, after a period of nine years from the date of occurrence, ie., 23.02.1999 and the prosecution has established the demand of illegal gratification made by the appellant on 12.02.1999, 21.02.1999, 22.02.1999, 23.02.1999 beyond reasonable doubt through PW2, PW4, PW11 and PW3.

11.Insofar as the ground that no independent witness was examined is concerned, PW3 shadow witness is not a relative witness, who accompanied TLO [PW13] are official witnesses, they do not have any motive or enmity against the appellant to depose against the appellant. Therefore, there is no reason to discard their evidence.

12.It is a clear case of the prosecution that the accused demanded Rs.5,000/- as gratification other than the legal remuneration from PW2 for sending report in his favour and as initial payment Rs.1,000/- was demanded and the balance to be paid later. The appellant neither sent any report nor reply to the letters of the Tahsildar, Karaikudi, dated 02.01.1999 and 15.12.1998, which is evident from Exp44 to Exp60.

13.Insofar as the sanction order is concerned, PW1, the Sanctioning Authority, in his evidence categorically stated that after perusing all the relevant records including the copy of FIR, Statements of the witnesses, Mahazars and chemical analysis report and after being satisfied with the materials has accorded sanction. What is required for a sanctioning authority is a *prima facie* subjective satisfaction that an offence has been committed and he is not expected to conduct a detailed examination as to whether the offence is made out or not. Therefore, the sanction is valid in the eye of law.

14.The explanation offered by the accused as to the bribe amount was recovered by the Inspector of Police PW13 at the time of trap in Exp5 seizure mahazar and the accused has also made an endorsement in the original seizure mahazar for having received the copy. Therefore, no prejudice is caused to the accused.

15.Insofar as the defence that the amount was received towards kist is concerned, as per ExD1 the land kist receipt No.753520 is only Rs.150/- issued in the name of Vishwam and DW1 Sakthivel also stated that kist receipt cannot be made, if the kist amount is not paid. Therefore, such a defence is not sustainable in



acceptance of the submission of the accused that the complainants version required corroboration in all circumstances, in abstract would encourage the bribe taker to receive illegal gratification in privacy and then insist for corroboration in case of the prosecution. Law cannot countenance such situation. Thus, it is not necessary that the evidence of a reliable witness is necessary to be corroborated by another witness, as such evidence stands corroborated from the other material on record. The court further distinguished the case of Panalal Damodar Rathi (supra) on the ground that in that case the Panch witness had not supported the prosecution case and therefore, the benefit of doubt was given to the accused. In Smt. Meena Balwant Hemke (supra) as the evidence was contradictory, the corroboration was found necessary.

Therefore, when the complainant has clearly stated about the demand, no corroboration is required.

20.The corroboration is required only when the evidence of witness is doubtful. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in **C.M.Sharma Vs State of Andhra Pradesh**, reported in **(2010) 15 SCC 1**, has held as follows:

"18.Further corroboration of evidence of a witness is required when his evidence is not wholly reliable. On appreciation of evidence, witnesses can be broadly categorized in three categories viz., unreliable, partly reliable and wholly reliable. In case of a partly reliable witness, the court seeks corroboration in material particulars from other evidence. However in a case in which a witness is wholly reliable, no corroboration is necessary. Seeking corroboration in all circumstance of the evidence of a witness forced to give bribe may lead to absurd result. Bribe is not taken in public view and, therefore, there may not be any person who could see the giving and taking of bribe. As in the present case, a shadow witness did accompany the contractor but the appellant did not allow him to be present in the chamber. Acceptance of this submission in abstract will encourage the bribe taker to receive illegal gratification in privacy and then insist for corroboration in case of prosecution. Law can not countenance such situation.

19.In our opinion it is not necessary that the evidence of a reliable witness is necessarily to be corroborated by another witness. Not only this corroboration of the evidence of a witness can be found from the other materials on record."

The evidence of PW3 with regard to the demand and acceptance of



tainted money is trustworthy and was not shattered by the defence.

21. Insofar as the ground that the details called for from the Thasildar had already been furnished by the appellant on 21.09.1999 itself is concerned, though he had claimed to have sent such details, the accused officer met the defacto complainant and demanded Rs.5,000/- as illegal gratification. It is established from Exp44 to Exp60 that even after receiving the letters from the Thasildar, the accused officer has not submitted his report and it is stated that it is the duty of the accused officer to submit the village accounts when asked by his superior and the accused has caused the delay in sending the report. Therefore, this ground raised by the appellant cannot be sustained.

22. Therefore, the prosecution has established the demand, acceptance and recovery of illegal gratification in this case.

23. Bribe givers only to ventilate their grievance, approach the vigilance officer after their prolonged suffering at the instance of the accused officer, which has been painfully observed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in State of U.P. Vs. Dr. G.K. Ghosh [1984] 1 SCC 254 as follows:

"by and large a citizen is somewhat reluctant, rather than anxious, to complaint to the Vigilance Department and to have a trap arranged even if illegal gratification is demanded by a Government Servant. There are numerous reasons for the reluctance. In the first place, he has to make a number of visits to the office of the Vigilance Department and to wait on a number of officers. He has to provide his own currency notes for arranging a trap. He has to comply with several formalities and sign several statements. He has to accompany the officers and participants of the raiding party and avocation. He has to sacrifice his time and effort whilst doing so. Thereafter, he has to attend the court at the time of trial from day to day. He has to withstand the searching cross-examination by the defence counsel as if he himself is guilty of some fault. In the result, a citizen who has been harassed by a Government Officer, has to face all these hazards. And if the explanation offered by the accused is accepted by the Court, he has to face he humiliation of being considered as a person who tried to falsely implicate a Government Servant, not to speak of facing the wrath of the Government servants of the department concerned, in his future dealings with the department. No one would therefore be too keen or too anxious to face such an ordeal. Ordinarily, it is only when a citizen feels oppressed by a feeling of being wronged and finds the situation to be beyond endurance, that he adopts



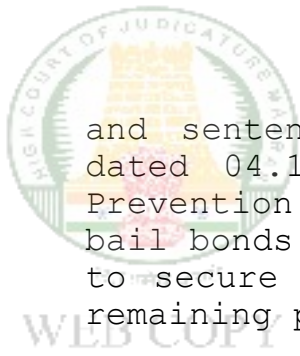
the course of approaching the Vigilance Department for laying a trap. His evidence cannot therefore be easily or lightly brushed aside. Of course, it cannot be gainsaid that it does not mean that the court should be oblivious of the need for caution and circumspection bearing in mind that one can conceive of cases where an honest or strict Government official may be falsely implicated by a vindictive person to whose demand, for showing favours, or for according a special treatment by giving a go-by to the rules, the official refuses to yield".

24. So citing unconnected stale motive is universal in the case of corruption by fiber thread of prolonged cross examination that too after number of years from the date of occurrence. What is required for an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act is that the demand, acceptance and recovery. In this case, the demand and acceptance were sufficiently proved by the prosecution and the tainted money as recorded in the entrustment mahazar [Exp5] was also recovered from the accused officer. The phenolphthalein test conducted on the both hands of the appellant/accused officer has also proved positive.

25. The corruption has ruined the system. Despite implementation of the Prevention of Corruption Act, corruption has not been eradicated and it has become a common affair. Nobody is having the sense of fear to the prevailing Act. The higher officials must act as an example to their subordinates in discharge of their duties. If the higher officials themselves commit mistakes, then they loose their morale to question their subordinates. Ultimately, the system fails. The Hon'ble Apex Court in *Niranjan Hemchandra Sashittal v. State of Maharashtra* reported in (2013) 4 SCC 642, painfully discussed the gravity of the corruption in the following terms:

"26. It can be stated without any fear of contradiction that corruption is not to be judged by degree, for corruption mothers disorder, destroys societal will to progress, accelerates undeserved ambitions, kills the conscience, jettisons the glory of the institutions, paralyses the economic health of a country, corrodes the sense of civility and mars the marrows of governance. It is worth noting that immoral acquisition of wealth destroys the energy of the people believing in honesty, and history records with agony how they have suffered."

26. Since the prosecution has established their case, this Court is not inclined to interfere with the order of the trial Court. Accordingly, the criminal appeal is dismissed. The conviction



and sentence imposed on the appellant in Spl.C.C.No.02 of 2014, dated 04.12.2015 by the Special Judge for trial of cases under Prevention of Corruption Act, Sivagangai is hereby confirmed. The bail bonds if any shall stand cancelled. The trial Court is directed to secure the appellant and confine him to prison, to undergo the remaining period of sentence.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar (AD II)

// True Copy //

/ /2020

Sub Assistant Registrar(CS)

dsk
To

- 1.The Special Judge
for Trial of Cases under the Prevention of
Corruption Act,
Sivagangai.
- 2.The Chief Judicial Magistrate,
Sivagangai
- 3.The Inspector of Police,
Vigilance and Anticorruption,
Sivagangai.
- 4.The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.

Copy to:
The Record Keeper (2 Copies),
Criminal Section (Records),
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.

+1 CC to M/s.G.PRABHU RAJADURAI, Advocate (SR-5373[F] dated 10/02/2020)

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