
Review Article

Critical Review of Vasa in Bhavaprakasha samhita

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Abstract:

Since the time immemorial, the plants have provided the basis for medicines. Many a times, it is seen that a plant growing nearby, turns out to be a source of a great medicine *Adhatoda vasica* Nees. – a very common plant growing in the surroundings contains an important quinazoline alkaloid Vasicine from which Bromhexine is derived. According to *Ayurveda*, every plant on the earth is medicinal. This reminds the Sanskrit quote “*namoolam anaushadham*”. But, the way it narrates the pharmacological action is pretty different from other contemporary sciences. Sometimes, the indication of a plant in *Ayurveda* matches with the indication of that plant’s metabolite or derivatives of metabolite by modern medicine. But, many a times, its indication is beyond the thought of an active principle. Exploring a medicinal plant with its diverse uses can provide a basis for the better understanding of that plant. This is possible when the literary information on a medicinal plant along with its different formulations is compiled and studied. The best source for such activity is a compendium known as *Bhava prakasha samhita*- a link between medicinal plant, formulations and indications. Present review is an earnest attempt to report the diversified aspect of *vasa*. The result of this study is intended to take a new step in preparing the formulations containing *vasa*.

Keywords: Vasa, Vrisha, Atarusha, formulations.

INTRODUCTION

Easy availability of any drug gains popularity among physicians as well as pharmaceuticals and this is the reason why almost every *kalpana* of *vasa* is found described in *Ayurvedika* text [1]. *Vasa*, botanically identified as *Adhatoda vasica* Nees, belonging to *Acanthaceae* family, is an important *Ayurvedic* medicinal herb [2]. The leaves of *Adusa* have been in use in Indian system of medicine for at least more than 2000 years. In fact, the antecedence of *Vasa* goes back to *vedic* period. *Koushika* and *Panini* works delineate *vasa* and it is described by the other commentators as *vrishaka* and *atarusha* (Kou.Su.8/16 & P.Gr 8/2/9) [3]. *Vasa* is a well known herb for respiratory disorders and febrile illness [4]. Almost all the *ayurvedic* seers have recognized its role in respiratory disorders. *Sodhala* and *Yogaraj* have emphatically claimed that it is a definite treatment for *rakta pitta*, *kshaya* and *kasa* [5]. *Vasa* is a drug that draws attention because of its use in different *kalpanas* and almost every *kalpana* of this drug is available in a classic recapitulation of ancient literature that draws attention with regard to the utility of *vasa* in a different formulation [6].

Even research on this plant in the contemporary sciences reported various activities. All the parts of the plant are used in herbal medicine and particularly the leaves are endorsed with insecticidal and parasiticidal properties. The root is valuable in strangury, leucorrhoea, bronchitis, asthma, bilious vomiting, sore eyes, fever and gonorrhoea. It is a valuable anti septic, anti periodic and anthelmintic [7]. The frequent use of *Adhatoda vasica* has resulted in its inclusion in the W.H.O

manual- The use of Traditional medicine in primary health care [8]. In spite of these facts, utility of *vasa* in actual clinical practice is confined primarily to the respiratory diseases only. The multiple therapeutic benefits of *vasa* is gradually disappearing and making *vasa* as a medicine for cough.

At this juncture, revisiting the pages of an important literature wherein the plant is discussed along with its different formulations is very much needed.

Bhava prakasha is an important work of *Ayurveda* which is enumerated among “*Laghu trayi*”. It is the popular book among vaidyas for centuries [9]. It is one of the classical books of *Bhavamishra*. The historians of *Ayurveda* consider *Bhavamishra* as a bridge between medieval and modern period [10]. He enlarged and extended the *Ayurvedic* science in tune with progress of time [11]. The period of *Bhava mishra* is believed to be 16th century A.D. [10]. This article is an earnest attempt to find out the importance and diversified aspect of *Vasa* in *Bhavaprakasha*

Materials

- *Bhavaprakasha* of *Bhavamishra* available in Vol-1 in print form, commentated and translated by Dr.Bulusu Sitaram, published by Chaukhambha orientalia, reprint :2012.
- *Bhavaprakasha* of *Bhavamishra* available in Vol-2 in print form, commentated and translated by Dr.Bulusu Sitaram, published by Chaukhambha orientalia, first edition :2010 were considered for the present review.

Methods:

- Mentioning of *vasa* in *Bhavaprakasha samhita* is collected and compiled.
- Formulations of *vasa* prescribed for the treatment of various diseases were collected
- Total numbers of formulations mentioned for various diseases were tabulated.
- Literary analysis of the formulations was done

Observation and Results

Table-1 Varga/Gana of Vasa

S.No	Khanda	Varga/Gana
01	Purva khanda	Guduchyadi varga
02	Madhyama khanda	Pancha tikta gana
03	Madhyama khanda	Pancha kashaya gana
04	Madhyama khanda	Kanta kubja gana

Table -2 Names of Vasa mentioned in Bhavaprakash samhita

S.no	Khanda	Synonyms
01	Purva khanda	Vasaka, Vasika, Bhisankmata, Simhika, Simhasya, Vajidanta, Atarusha, Atarushaka, Atarusha, Vrisha, Tamra, Simhaparna

Table 6:Formulations of Vasa in Bhava prakasha samhita

S.N	Formulation	Main Indications	References
01	Lakshadi taila	Jwara, Bhrama, shrama, to induce sleep	B.M.K. 1/145
02	Parpatadi kvatham	Jwara, Pipasa, Daha, Pittaraktayukta jwara	B.M.K 1/343
03	Mahadrakshadi kwatha	Pitta jwara	B.M.K 1/353
04	Vasa hima	Kasayukta jwara, Raktapitta	B.M.K 1/357
05	Guduchyadi kwatha	Pittaja jwara	B.M.K 1/358
06	Yavanyadi kwatha	Kasa, shwasa kaphaja jwara	B.M.K 1/383
07	Vasadi kwatha	Jwara, Kasa	B.M.K 1/384
08	Kiratadi kwatha	Vata kapha Jwara	B.M.K 1/405
09	Vasa rasa	Pitta kapha jwara, Amlapitta, Kamala	B.M.K 1/436
10	Kwatha	Rakta sthivana	B.M.K 1/649
11	Kshudradi kwatha	Jihvaka sannipata	B.M.K1/660
12	Kwatha	Sandhi graham, Hanustambha, Manyastambha,	B.M.K1/664
13	Kwatha	Kantha kubja	B.M.K 1/693
14	Kiratadi gana kashaya	Kantha kubja	B.M.K 1/694
15	Kwatha	Chaturthaka jwara	B.M.K 1/770
16	Patoladi kwatha	Durjala dosha	B.M.K 1/835
17	Dwattrimshat kwatha	Sannipata Jwara Shwasa Balasa, Kasa,	B.M.K 1/845
18	Vasa swarasa	Kasa	B.M.K 1/861
19	Kwatha	Halimaka, Pandu, Kamala	B.M.K 8/49
20	Hima	Raktapitta, Jwara, daha, Trushna, shosha	B.M.K 9/23
21	Swarasa	Raktapitta,	B.M.K 9/27
22	Kwatha	Raktapitta,	B.M.K 9/27
23	Putapaka	Raktapitta kasa jwara, kshaya	B.M.K 9/28

02	Madhyama khanda	Vasaka, Vrisha, Vrishaka, Atarusha Simhika, Simhanana, Simhasya
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Table 3: Properties of Vasa

Rasa	Virya	Guna	Doshaghnat a	Reference
Kashaya, Tikta	Sheeta	Laghu	Vata krit, Pitta kapha hara	B.P.K.Gu. Varga

B.P.K.Gu.varga-Bhavaprakasha purva Khanda Guduchyadi varga

Table 4: Actions and indication of vasa mentioned in purva khanda

Actions	Indications	Reference
Shwasahara, Kasahara, sheeta paha Hridya, Trushna shamaka, Artihara, Chardighna, Mehahara, Kusthaghna, Kshayapaha	Sheeta, Trushna, Arti, Shwasa, Kasa, Jwara, Chardi, Meha, Kustha, Kshaya	B.P.K.Gu. Varga

B.P.K.Gu.varga-Bhavaprakasha purva Khanda Guduchyadi varga

24	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Shwasa, Raktapitta</i>	B.M.K 9/31
25	<i>Vasa rasa</i>	<i>Raktapitta(urdhwaga and adhoga)</i>	B.M.K 9/37
26	<i>Khandakadyavaleha</i>	<i>Raktapitta, Kshaya, Kasa, Parshva shula</i>	B.M.K 9/75
27	<i>Vasa kwatha</i>	<i>Urdhwaga Amlapitta</i>	B.M.K 10/12
28	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Amlapitta</i>	B.M.K 10/17
29	<i>Shivapala pindi</i>	<i>Amlapitta, Arochaka, Jwara, Daha, Shosha</i>	B.M.K 10/18
30	<i>Vasavalehya</i>	<i>Shwasa, Rajayakshma, Kasa, Parshwashula</i>	B.M.K 11/55
31	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Pittaja kasa</i>	B.M.K 12/24
32	<i>Swarasa</i>	<i>Kshaya kasa, Raktasthivana</i>	B.M.K 12/29
33	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Shwasa</i>	B.M.K 14/38
34	<i>Bhramadyavaleha</i>	<i>Swarabheda</i>	B.M.K 15/18
35	<i>Maha narayana taila</i>	<i>Vatavyadhi</i>	B.M.K 24/295
36	<i>Rasnadi Kwatha</i>	<i>Shula, Amavata</i>	B.M.K 26/131
37	<i>Maha rasnadi kwatha</i>	<i>Amavata</i>	B.M.K 26/132
38	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Vatarakta</i>	B.M.K 29/36
39	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Vatarakta</i>	B.M.K 29/50
40	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Vatarakta</i>	B.M.K 29/52
41	<i>Guduchyadi ghrta</i>	<i>Vatarakta</i>	B.M.K 29/102
42	<i>Maha guduchi ghrta</i>	<i>Vatarakta, shosha, krostuka sheersha, Ghridrasi</i>	B.M.K 29/114
43	<i>Vidari ghrta</i>	<i>Mutraghata, Shwasa</i>	B.M.K 36/47-48
44	<i>Eladi kwatha</i>	<i>Mutrashmari, Mutrakichrra</i>	B.M.K 37/11
45	<i>Vrusha kwatha</i>	<i>Kaphaja prameha (shanairmeha)</i>	B.M.K 38/48
46	<i>Loha rasayana</i>	<i>Vata kaphadosha, Twak vikara, Kamala</i>	B.M.K 39/32
47	<i>Triphaladya tailam</i>	<i>Sthaulya, Pandu</i>	B.M.K 39/58
48	<i>Vasa swarasa</i>	<i>Daurgandhya</i>	B.M.K 39/69
49	<i>Manjisthadi kashaya</i>	<i>Kustha, Vatarakta, Kandu, Dadru</i>	B.M.K 54/101
50	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Sheeta pitta</i>	B.M.K 55/07
51	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Visarpa, Daha, Jwara, Shotha</i>	B.M.K 56/34
52	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Pittaja visphota</i>	B.M.K 58/20
53	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Daha, Jwara, Visarpa, Vrana</i>	B.M.K 60/42
54	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Masoorika, Visarpa Jwara</i>	B.M.K 60/47
55	<i>Vasa swarasa</i>	<i>Jwara, Masoorika</i>	B.M.K 60/63
56	<i>Hima</i>	<i>Sheetala Jvara</i>	B.M.K 60/67
57	<i>Kumari taila</i>	<i>Murcha, Halimaka, Hanugraha, Bhadirya</i>	B.M.K 62/44
58	<i>Vasa kwatha</i>	<i>Shwasa, Pinasa, Kasa, Netra roga, Vaiswarya</i>	B.M.K 63/247
59	<i>Darvyadi kwatha</i>	<i>Pradara</i>	B.M.K 68/17-18
60	<i>Pancha kashaya churna</i>	<i>Prasansini</i>	B.M.K.70/43
61	<i>Modaka</i>	<i>Yoniroga</i>	B.M.K.70/49
62	<i>Pancha tikta gana</i>	<i>Visarpa, Kustha</i>	B.M.K.71/93
63	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Mukha mandika</i>	B.M.K 71/104
64	<i>Kwatha</i>	<i>Kasa in children</i>	B.M.K 71/160
65	<i>Churna</i>	<i>Shwasa, Kasa, Tamaka shwasa</i>	B.M.K. 71/163

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table -8 Kwatha / Kashaya containing Vasa

S.No	Kwatha	Reference
01	<i>Parpatadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/343
02	<i>Mahadrakshadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/353
03	<i>Guduchyadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/358
04	<i>Yavanyadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/383
05	<i>Vasadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/384
06	<i>Kiratadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/405
07	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/649
08	<i>Kshudradi kwatha</i>	B.M.K1/660

09	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K1/664
10	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/693
11	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/770
12	<i>Patoladi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/835
13	<i>Dwatrimshat kwatha</i>	B.M.K 1/845
14	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 8/49
15	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 9/27
16	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 9/31
17	<i>Vasa kwatha</i>	B.M.K 10/12
18	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 10/17
19	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 12/24

20	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 14/38
21	<i>Rasnadi Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 26/131
22	<i>Maha rasnadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 26/132
23	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 29/36
24	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 29/50
25	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 29/52
26	<i>Eladi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 37/11
27	<i>Vrusha kwatha</i>	B.M.K 38/48
28	<i>Manjisthadi kashaya</i>	B.M.K 54/101
29	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 55/07
30	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 56/34
31	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 58/20
32	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 60/42
33	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 60/47
34	<i>Vasa kwatha</i>	B.M.K 63/247
35	<i>Daryadi kwatha</i>	B.M.K 68/17-18
36	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 71/104
37	<i>Kwatha</i>	B.M.K 71/160

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 9: Hima containing Vasa

S.No	Hima	Reference
01	<i>Vasa hima</i>	B.M.K 1/357
02	<i>Hima</i>	B.M.K 9/23
03	<i>Hima</i>	B.M.K 60/67

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 10: Churna containing Vasa

S.No	Churna	Reference
01	<i>Pancha kashaya churna</i>	B.M.K.70/43
02	<i>Churna</i>	B.M.K. 71/163

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 11: Ghrita containing Vasa

S.No	Ghrita	Reference
01	<i>Guduchyadi ghrita</i>	B.M.K 29/102
02	<i>Maha guduchi ghrita</i>	B.M.K 29/114
03	<i>Vidari ghrita</i>	B.M.K 36/47-48

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 12: Avaleha containing Vasa

S.No	Avaleha	Reference
01	<i>Khandakadyavaleha</i>	B.M.K 9/75
02	<i>Vasavalehya</i>	B.M.K 11/55
03	<i>Bhramadyavaleha</i>	B.M.K 15/18

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 13: Taila containing Vasa

S.No	Taila	Reference
01	<i>Lakshadi taila</i>	B.M.K. 1/145
02	<i>Maha narayana taila</i>	B.M.K 24/295
03	<i>Triphaladya tailam</i>	B.M.K 39/58
04	<i>Kumari taila</i>	B.M.K 62/44

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 14: Miscellaneous formulations containing Vasa

S.No	Modaka	Reference
01	<i>Modaka</i>	B.M.K.70/49

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02	<i>Shivapala pindi</i>	B.M.K 10/18
03	<i>Kiratadi gana kashaya</i>	B.M.K 1/694
04	<i>Loha rasayana</i>	B.M.K 39/32
05	<i>Pancha tikta gana</i>	B.M.K.71/93

B.M.K-Bhavaprakasha madhyama khanda

Table 15: Total number of formulations and different dosage forms of Vasa

S.no	Type of formulation	Number of formulation
01	<i>Swarasa</i>	08
02	<i>Kwatha</i>	37
03	<i>Hima</i>	03
04	<i>Ghrita</i>	03
05	<i>Taila</i>	04
06	<i>Avaleha</i>	03
07	<i>Churna</i>	02
08	Miscellaneous	05
	Total	65

DISCUSSION :

On Gana/ Varga: Vasa finds its place in *Guduchyadi varga* of *purva khanda* and *pancha kashaya gana*, *pancha tikta gana* and *kanta kubja gana* of *madhyama khanda*. Among these *ganas*, *Pancha kashaya gana* poses a question about the inclusion of Vasa. But, *Bhavamishra* mentioned its *rasa* as *kashaya rasa*, followed by *tikta rasa*. This can be taken as basis of inclusion of Vasa in *pancha kashaya gana*. It is really interesting to note that the drugs falling in *pancha kashaya gana* in *Bhavaprakasha* are *Vasa*, *Vacha*, *Patola*, *Priyangu* and *Nimba*. A.K.Nadakarni- the author of Indian materia medica also considered *Vasa*, *Vacha*, *Patola*, *Priyangu* and *Nimba* as *panca kashaya gana*¹². But, according to *acharya Sushruta*, *pancha kashaya gana* includes *Tinduka*, *Haritaki*, *Lodhra*, *Lajjala* and *Amalaki*¹³.

On Botanical name: The plant *Vasa* is commonly called by the name *Adhatoda vasica* Nees. Infact, this is the synonym of *Justicia adhatoda* L. belongs to *Acanthaceae*. *Justicia adhatoda* L. is an accepted name¹⁴.

On Basonym: The basonym *Vasa* signifies as to, the one which grows like a bush¹⁵. It also carries another meaning as to, that which cures the diseases like *shwasa*¹⁶.

On synonyms: A total of 14 synonyms that include 12 synonyms from *Purvakhanda* and 2 synonyms viz. *Vrishaka* and *Simhanana* are found in *madhyama khanda*. Among the 14 synonyms, *Vasaka*, *Simhasya*, *Vrishaka*, *Vajidanta* and *Vrishha* depict the morphological characters of the plant as follows

- *Vasaka*- that which covers the ground with dense foliage¹⁷
- *Simhasya*- The flower resembles the mouth of a lion¹⁸
- *Vrishha*, *Vrishaka*- Its flower contains profuse nectar¹⁹
- *Vajidanta*- its flower resembles the horse`s tooth²⁰.

While, *Vasaka* and *Bhisankmata*, describe its importance in therapeutics. The synonym *Vrishha* is so much close to *Vrishaa*(the synonym of *Dravanti*) that sometimes, creates confusion. Similarly, *Simhi*(the synonym of *Brihati*) is close to *simhika* of *Vasa*.

On properties: According to *Bhavaprakasha purva khanda*, *Vasa* possesses *kashaya tikta rasa*, and *sheeta virya*. It acts as

vata krit and *kapha pitta hara*. It is very clear that it is a *samana pratyaya rabdha darvya* and follows the principle-1 of mechanism of drug action as explained by *acharya charaka*²¹. Accordingly, it undergoes *katu vipaka*. Since, the *rasa* is more dominant; hence, *acharya Bhavamishra* has not mentioned *katu vipaka* in the verse. The plant actions are described on the basis of *sheeta virya* supported by *kashaya, tikta rasa*. *Vasa* with its, *kashaya tikta rasa* and *sheeta virya* acts as *pitta hara* and *kapha hara*.

On actions: *acharya Bhavamishra* considered *Vasa* as *Swarya, Hridya, Trishna nigrhana, artihara, Swasahara, Kasahara, Jwaraghna, Pramehaghna, Chardi nigrhana, Kusthaghna* and *kshayapaha* in *purvakhanda*. Surprisingly, only one formulation in the form of decoction is explained for the treatment *Prameha viz shanairmeha*.

On the useful part: Useful part of *vasa* is not mentioned in many formulations. The formulations such as *kwatha* and *vasa swarasa* explained in different contexts, have clearly included the part of *vasa* as *mula* (B.M.K 29/52) or *patra* (B.M.K 39/69) (B.M.K 9/27) (B.M.K 9/28) The other verses describing many formulations explained in *madhyama khanda* include the term either *Atarusha* or *Vrisha* or *Vasaka* or *Vasa*. According to *anukta paribhasha* of *Sharangdhara*, root has to be taken as the useful part when the part of a plant is not specified in the verse²². Thus, a lot of formulations containing *vasa*, explained in the *Bhavaprakasha* need to include root of *Vasa* as an ingredient.

Vasa as anupana/Sahapana: *Acharya Bhavamishra* tried *Vasa* as the drug in many conditions. But, he also tried it as a *sahapana/anupana* of a formulation (B.M.K 9/37) to treat *rakta pitta*. This proves that *Vasa* can also be an effective vehicle to reach the drug target.

Vasa as bhavana dravya: *Vasa* finds its place as a *bhavana dravya* in one of the formulations (B.M.K12/29). This gives an idea that *Vasa* can be used as a *bhavana dravya* for *kashaya rasa dravyas* to enhance their efficacy.

Vasa as vama dravya: *Vasa* is used as a *vama dravya* to treat *sheeta pitta* by inducing emesis. *Vasa* is used along with *Patola* and *Nimba* for this purpose. Since all three are *vatakrit* in nature, stimulates *udana vata* to bring emesis.

On the formulations: 65 formulations containing *vasa* are found in the *Bhavaprakasha Samhita* especially in *madhyama khanda*. Among them, 37 are in the form of decoction which is the highest type of formulation. While, the *swarasa* is second highest (8) type of formulation containing *Vasa*.

Besides, the literary search of *Vasa* in *Bhavaprakasha* yielded the following important facts

- The list of indication of *Vasa* mentioned in *madhyamakhanda*, is expanded in comparison to *purvakhanda* which is evident from the fact that *Vasa* entered as one of the ingredients of many formulations advocated for various diseases.
- None of the formulations containing *Vasa* has been found in *uttara khanda*
- Surprisingly, only one formulation advocated for the treatment of *prameha* in *madhyama khanda*.
- *Vasa* is credited with a controversial action- *sheetapaha*. For the reason, *sheeta prasham ana dravyas* usually possess *ushna virya*. The controversy can be eliminated if the action is to pacify *sheeta* of *kapha* with its *kashaya tikta* and *ruksha* properties.

CONCLUSION:

On analyzing the various aspects of *Vasa* explained in *Bhavaprakasha samhita*, it appears that it has been subjected to different thoughts of the author-*Bhavamishra*. He not only utilized it as a chief drug in many formulations, but also as a supportive drug in various forms such as a *bhavana dravya, vama dravya* and as an *anupana* as well. Out of 65 formulations of *Vasa*, 37 (56.92%) are *kwatha* and 8(12.30%) are *swarasa*. Thus, the aqueous preparations of *Vasa* are highly appreciated in *Bhavaprakasha samhita*. This review will direct towards better understanding of *Vasa* along with its wide range of utility thereof. With this, it can be concluded that *Vasa* is a hidden gold in *Bhavaprakasha* of *Bhavamishra*.

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