Design Resource

Blue Pottery - Jaipur

Art of Blue Glaze Pottery

by
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Ms. Anisha Crasto and Ms. Anushree Kumar
NID, Bengaluru

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/blue-pottery-jaipur

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Introduction

The Blue Pottery or Blue Glaze pottery is an ancient and unique craft practiced in India from time immemorial. Historically Jaipur city has evolved as the main center for producing the famous Blue pottery articles. Later it spread in small pockets around Jaipur. Kot Jewar became the next big center after Jaipur in producing Blue Pottery. Kot Jewar comes under the Tehsil of Dudu and post Boraj. It is a small village about 60 km away from Jaipur towards Bagru. There are around 300 families settled in this village out of which around 200 are involved in Blue Pottery craft and other families practice farming. The village is surrounds by hills, sand dunes and ponds. Blue pottery as the name suggests is mainly made in blue color. But, with the changing time and availability of new colors, artisans are working using other colors too. The art derived its name from the eye-catching Persian blue color used in it.

The distinguishing factor which makes the craft of Blue Pottery different from any other pottery techniques being practiced around the world is that it is the only pottery technique that does not use clay. Also the blue color used in it makes it distinct in appearance. Originally blue and turquoise green colors were used on a white base. The pottery is semi translucent or opaque in nature. Blue pottery rarely develops crack due to continuous smoothing of the surface and low firing. It is suitable for daily use and is hygienic. Since it is fired at a very low temperature it makes it fragile.

Artisan filling the design with different colors.

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The typical blue pottery flower vase.

The women involved in grinding Multani Mitti (Fullers Earth).

Tiles of standard sizes are made and used to produce different products.

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Blue pottery products stocked at artisan's work place.

A typical work environment at Kot Jewar.

Traditional and contemporary products made in blue pottery.

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Source:
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People and Place

Blue pottery was a native craft of Persia, which was brought to India by Mughals and later brought to Jaipur by the then ruling Maharaja and got patronized. The local people got trained under the expert guidance of few Persian artists and this is how the craft grew in Jaipur. Later, late Shri Kripal Singhji started an institute for people to learn this languishing craft. A lot of artists and people not having a creative background joined to learn blue pottery. Therefore, there is no specific community involved and practicing this craft. Though, a majority of these artisans belong to Kumbhar (potters) family, who have stopped working on red clay and moved on to practice Blue Pottery on a large scale. There are around 200 families in Kot Jewar practicing this craft and around 20-25 families practicing in Jaipur. These families basically belong to Kumawat and Prajapati caste which are supposed to practice pottery.

Blue Pottery Craft started in Jaipur and latter many people learned this craft and started practicing it in places near to Jaipur. Though presently there are only few centers where Blue Pottery is being practiced, new people are gradually showing interest in blue pottery due to its increased demands in recent years. Presently, apart from many big setups in Jaipur the craft is being practiced in nearby places like Kot Jewar, Sanganer, Neota, Delhi and Khurja. People in Jaipur are still practicing the traditional way while those in Khurja have moved on to make the base in red clay and then glazing it in vibrant colors.

The craftsman and his family.

Ancestral house of the crafts person.

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Local god Raamdev ji shrine.

The village of Kot Jewer is surrounded by hills, sand dunes and ponds.

The village environment.

Children around Kot Jewar.

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Source:
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Tools and Materials

• Tools:
The basic tools used in Blue Pottery are outlined below:

Chakki (Grinder):
The electrical grinding machine is used to grind the pieces of raw material (Saaji, Katria Gond, Multani Mitti and glass) into fine powder.

Grinding Stone:
A small grinding stone is used to grind Multani Mitti, Saaji, Katira Gond and glass. These stones are found on river bed and are available in local market.

Jaali (Iron Sieve):
Iron sieve is used to sieve/filter all the grinded raw materials for filtering out unwanted and big particles.

Molds:
Molds of desired shape and size are made out of Plaster Of Paris in which the articles are casted. These molds are long lasting if kept carefully.

Tarazu (Weighing Tool):
The dough is prepared by mixing Quartz Powder, Multani Mitti, Katria Gond, Saaji and glass in definite proportion. To weigh them the traditional weighing tool is used.

Flattening Tool:
Made out of fired clay, a flattening tool is used to flatten the dough which is then either cut into tiles or put in the molds to take the desired shape.

Base Stone:
It is a flat stone block on which the products are initially rubbed to smoothen the surface and remove unwanted material/coarseness.

Regmaal (Sand Paper):
Sand papers of different grains are used to make the surface of the product smooth. Generally the artisans use 60, 100 and 180 number of sand paper (more the number finer the grain) to rub the surface at different stages.

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Patti (Iron Blade/ Knife):
The blades are used to remove the unwanted material from a product after casting and in order to give a uniform thickness to the product. The blades are also used to cut the dough. It is bent from front so that the scooping process becomes easy.

Saancha (Iron Cutter):
For basic shape of tiles, photo frames etc. which have definite size and are flat in nature artisans use saancha to cut them. This makes the work easy, less time consuming and accurate.

Koochi (Broom):
A small broom locally called as Koochi is made out of husk. It is used to brush off the dust generated while smoothing the surface with sand paper.

Chaak (Potter's Wheel):
The artisans in recent years have started using electrical wheels instead of the traditional hand driven one. The potter's wheel is generally used to make small piece, necks of the vases or base or a product.

Brushes:
Different numbers of brushes are used to paint beautiful motifs on the surface of a Blue Pottery product. Earlier the artisans used to make their own brushes using the hair from the squirrel's tail. These brushes were long lasting but now with the ban on these material artisans buy brushes from market.

Bhatti (Heating Kiln):
The final products are fired in a traditional closed kiln made out of clay and brick. These are generally circular in shape to trap the heat and can accommodate an average of 50-60 products kept on a patiya (cement plates) and separated by a nali (terracotta stands). They are closed from above and wood is put from below.

Patiya (Cement Plates):
Casted cement plates of certain shapes are used during firing to stack the final products on top of each other. This separation helps in flow of heat and avoids sticking of products. The shape of these plates is broad from behind and tapers in front. This shape fits well in a circular kiln and thus accommodates more products.

Nali (Terracotta Stands):
To create gaps between two patiya's three nali's are used. The stacking is done by keeping the products on one patiya then placing the nali's on three corners with the help of terracotta dough (which prevent unevenness) and then another patiya is kept on top of it.

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• Raw Material:
The raw material required in the making of Blue Pottery products are procured from the local market and are described as follows:

Ground Quartz Stone:
Quartz is procured from nearby places like Ajmer, Beawar, Udaipur and Neem ka Thana. Powered quartz is snow white in color and is the main raw material for which it is bought in bulk. The cost varies from Rs.2200 – Rs.2500/ Ton (As of in the year 2011-12).

Kaanch (Glass):
Scrap or broken pieces of glass is used in the process. Earlier these glasses used to be bought from the local ka-baadi shop free of cost, but now artisans buy it at the rate of Rs.8 - Rs.10/Kg. The glass once bought from the market goes through washing and then it is grounded into pieces. This is basically done by the women of the house during their free hours. These small pieces are then grinded into fine powder using a grinding machine. Glass is basically a mixture of Boric Oxide and silica which reduces the temperature and also helps in baking the quartz.

Katira Gond (Edible Gum):
Katira Gond acts as an adhesive and is readily available in the market. It costs Rs.100 - Rs.120/Kg. The Gond is obtained in big pieces which then hand-grinded using a grinding stone on a stone base. This process is practiced by the women in the house. The grounded Gond is then turned into fine powder in the grinding machine and finally sieved in an iron Jaali (sieve).

Multani Mitti (Fullers Earth):
Multani Mitti or Fullers Earth is very fine in nature and is available in form of solid lumps. It cost Rs.18 – Rs.20/ Kg and can be easily found in a grocer's shop.

Saaji (Soda Bicarbonate/Bentonite):
Saaji is an edible salt generally used in making papads. It is available in the form of small pieces and costs Rs.50 – Rs.60/Kg. It is also grounded and made into fine powder.

Maida (Flour):
Maida is used for coating the products and is also sometimes used as a substitute in place of Multani Mitti. It also acts as an adhesive. This can be procured from grocer's shop for Rs.16 – Rs.18/Kg

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Colors:
Two types of colors are used in Blue Pottery
- Oxide colors
- Ferro colors

The main colors used in Blue Pottery are

1. Dark Blue – from Cobalt Oxide
2. Light Blue – from copper oxide
3. Green – from Chrome Oxide
4. Bright Yellow– From Cadmium Oxide
5. Brown – obtained from Ferro colors

Raakh (Burnt Wood Dust):
Raakh is used to give shape to the product when it is in a mold. It is non-sticky and can be easily brushed off once dried.

Wood:
For firing purposes locally available and seasoned Khezadi wood is used.

Other ingredients used are:
Charcoal, Water, Borex powder, Zinc Oxide, Potassium nitrate, and Boric acid.

Quartz- the main raw material in blue pottery.

Lumps of salt sajja.

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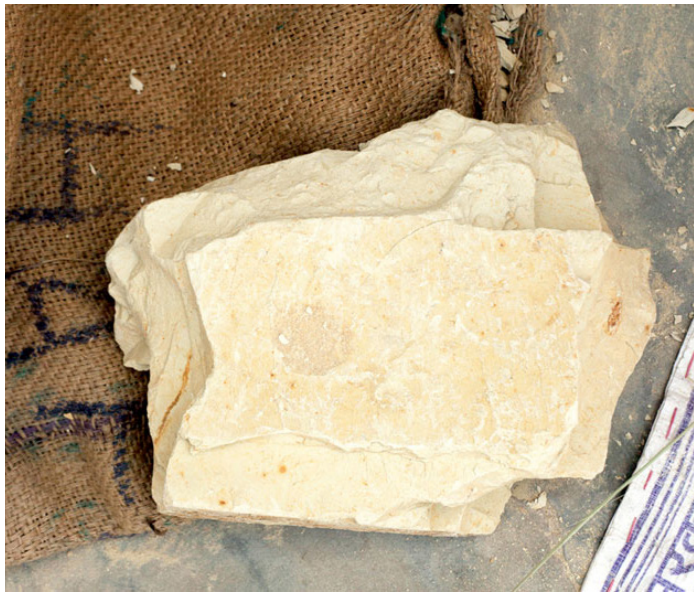
Kaanch (Glass).



Multani Mitti (Fullers Earth).

Katira Gond (Edible Gum).

The dough being molded into a circular shape with the help of a brick.

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POP molds and sandpaper used to make cups.

Raakh (Burnt wood dust) being filled in the mold to give it a desired shape.

Once the product is made the raakh is brushed off using a Koochi (Broom).

Base of any product is made on the Chaak (Potter's Wheel).

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Regmaal (Sand Paper), used to rub the surface of the product in order to make it smooth.

Oxide colors used to paint on products.

Different sizes of brushes.

Handmade brushes.

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Designs are made on the product.

Patti (Iron Blade/Knife) used to mix color and also to scarp out excess dough.

Maida, mixed with other ingredients is used to coat the final product.

Traditional Bhatti used to fire the products.

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Nali, terracotta stands.

Patiya (cement/ terracotta plates).

Wood used as a fuel.

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Types of containers used to store the colors.

Saancha (Iron Cutter) used to cut the shapes of tiles.

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Making Process

The making process of blue pottery product is very tedious and time consuming. It involves various stages. The whole process can be divided into following main steps;

1. Making of the Dough
2. Making of the Molds
3. Casting of the Products
4. Scrubbing
5. Finishing
6. Attaching the Base
7. Smoothening
8. Designing
9. Color Making
10. Painting
11. Glazing
12. Firing

Making of the Dough:
The raw materials like quartz powder, Multani Mitti, scrap glass, Katria Gond, and Saaji are used to make the dough for Blue Pottery. Firstly, Multani Mitti, scrap glass, Katria Gond, and Saaji are broken and grinded into fine powder. After this, these raw materials are weighed in specific amount- quartz powder (40 kg), Multani Mitti (1 kg), scrap glass (7 kg), Katria Gond (1 kg), and Saaji (1 kg) and are mixed together with water on a clean floor. The mixture is kneaded properly to prepare non-sticky dough which is kept for at least 7-8 hours before using it.

Making of the Molds:
Artisans develop molds in Plaster of Paris (POP) to caste the desired shape of the blue pottery products. The dough used in blue pottery lacks plasticity due to which they can't be hard-pressed on wheel to make large products. The products break as the dough is pulled up. Therefore the products are casted in the molds. These molds are made in all desired shapes and sizes and then dried. One mold can be used for number of times if properly maintained. Small and easy product can be made in one mold, whereas complex items may involve more than two molds to make a final product. For example, a vase is made up in four parts. The central part is made out of two hemispherical molds. The neck and the base of the vase are turned on the potter's wheel. All these four parts are joined together using the dough and the surface is smoothed.

Casting of the Products:
For casting of the products, desired amount of the prepared dough is taken and rolled over the base stone. It is

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then flattened using a flattening tool on the stone base till is gets a round shape like chapatti with an approximate thickness of 4-5 mm. This round shaped chapatti is then carefully placed in the mold. The mold is continuously wiggled so that the dough sets properly inside the mold. Once the dough is partially placed in the mold, the mold is filled with raakh (burnt wood dust) and is pressed gently so that the dough takes the exact shape of the mold. The extra edges of the dough which comes out of the mold are cut using a knife. After this the mold is turned upside down and removed. The prepared product along with raakh is kept for 1-2 days for drying.

Scrubbing:
After the product is dried and has taken the shape of the mold it is turned upside down and the raakh is removed from it. The extra raakh stuck on the walls are brushed off using a koochi (small broom). Generally while placing the dough in the mold the dough achieves an uneven thickness making the walls of the product non-uniformed. To create the walls of uniform thickness the product is sprinkled with a small amount of water to make it leather hard. After that with the help of Patti (iron knife) the extra material is scooped off making the walls even. The product is dried again for few hours.

Finishing:
The dried product now undergoes several stages of finishing process, firstly the rough edges of the product is removed by rubbing it on the stone base. This process is done gently by hand. After that the product is rubbed with regmaal (sandpaper) to remove the major grains, which occur due to raakh and scrubbing.

Attaching the Base:
The products are added with a base wherever required. Generally vases, small cups stands, etc. are provided with base to give them stability. The base is mainly fixed on the product (if round in shape) on the potter's wheel. The product is turned upside down over the potter's wheel and the base is sprinkled with water so that it gets leather hard. A small amount of dough is used along with some water to make the base. Once the base is made, the finished product is again left for drying for 1-2 days.

Smoothening:
The dried product with base now goes through another finishing process which is mainly focused on smoothing the surface for painting. Therefore products are coated with a coat of dough mixed with water to fill the major holes and dried. Once dried it is rubbed with regmaal to smoothen the surface. A second round of coating is done once the product is rubbed. This time the product is dipped in the slurry, prepared by mixing quartz powder (10 kg), powdered glass (3 kg), Maida (edible flour, 2kg) and water. The process is done by hand in a way that the coating is done evenly. After drying the surface is again rubbed with regmaal and made ready for painting.

Designing:
Once the surface smoothing process is completed the product moves to design development process. Artisan

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makes designs from his imagination and seldom uses a tracing. All products are individually painted by hand. Designing starts with making the outlines on a dried coated surface of the product. If the product is circular in shape it is placed on the potter's wheel and the brush tip is touched on the surface while the wheel is rotating and thus the outline is made. The further intricate designs are made by hand using brushes of different sizes.

Color Making:
The colors used in Blue Pottery are mainly oxides and sometime Ferro metal. These oxides are available in the market in form of small lumps. The lumps of oxides are mixed with edible gum and made into powdered form by grinding. Edible gum acts as a binding agent.

Painting:
The designs/outlines made on the products are now filled with the oxide colors using fine brushes. The main colors used in Blue Pottery are blue, green, yellow and brown. The product is kept for drying once painted.

Glazing:
After the paint is dried the product is glazed. A special glaze is prepared using different raw material in definite proportion. A mixture of powdered glass (21kg), Borex (17 kg), zinc oxide (1 kg) potassium nitrate (2 kg) and boric acid (7 kg) is prepared and heated till it melts. The mixture is allowed to cool and lumps are obtained which are again grounded into fine powder. This powder is further mixed with Maida(flour) and slurry is prepared using water. The final products are dipped in this solution in a way that it gets an even coating. The product is finally dried in sun.

Firing:
The products prepared so far taken for firing in a closed kiln. They are stacked inside the kiln one on top of the other, separated by patiya and nali. The stacking is done with utmost care so that no two products stick to each other, there is proper circulation of heat within and the kiln is uniformly packed. If products stick to each other there are possibilities of them turning black. After stacking the kiln is closed from top. Heating is done from below using wood and charcoal. The temperature goes up to 800-850 degree Celsius. The firing process takes almost 4-5 hours. Thereafter, the kiln is left for slow cooling for 2-3 days. Any drastic change in temperature may lead to develop cracks in the products. Once the kiln is cooled, it is opened and the products are taken out and checked. In case of rejection, the pieces are separated. The final products are cleaned and are packed for the market.

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Initially all the raw materials are grinded to make fine powder.

The grounded raw material is sieved with Jaali (Iron Sieve).

The raw materials are mixed with water to make the dough.

The non-sticky dough is ready for casting.

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The dough is flattened in a round shape like chapatti.

The round shaped dough is placed in the mold and the mold is wiggled until dough sets properly inside the mold.

The excess dough is removed.

The raakh is filled inside the mold.

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The mold is turned upside down to remove the shaped dough.

The shaped dough is allowed to dry.

The dried products, after removing the raakh are now ready for finishing process.

The dried raakh is brushed off using a koochi (small broom).

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Rough edges are smoothened by rubbing on a stone.

Surface of the cup is smoothened using sand paper.

Scooping is done to make the inside walls even.

A coat of prepared dough is applied to fill the gaps.

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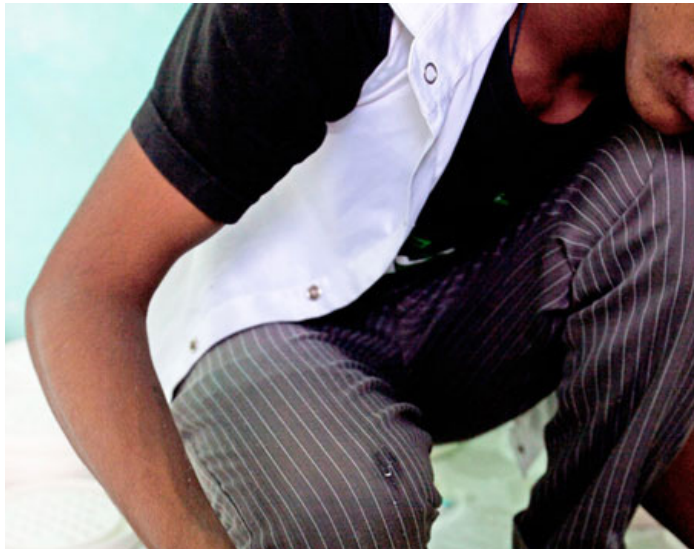
The base is attached using potter's wheel.

The product is again smoothened after drying.



The products are coated with a coat of slurry (dough mixed with water).

Artisan designs from their imagination.

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The designs on the products are filled with the oxide colors after sketching.

The product is kept for drying after painting.

The product is dipped in final solution of glaze to obtain shine.

The excess solution is removed and kept for drying.

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To make the surface of the nali even small amount of dough is placed on the nali.

Products are placed between the two patiya (cement plates) and separated by nails.

The final products are stacked inside the furnace.

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Furnace is closed by cement/terracotta plates.

The final products are cleaned and marketed.

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Products

The craft was initially used for decorating the temples, mosques and palace. With new interventions and market demands whole new range of products were introduced. Today artisans make all sort of possible things in blue pottery along with the traditional product.

Product range from Surahi (arrow necked water jugs), flower vases, cylindrical jars, plates, small bowls, ashtrays, essence holder, lamp stands, coasters, mirror frames, soap dishes, paper weights, T-light holder, photo-frames, napkin rings, boxes for trinkets, beads, ear rings, knobs, hangers, decorative wall hangings, games, cups, mugs, tea sets, snacks tray, glazed tiles and games.

A narrow necked vase in intricate floral motifs.

A vase in captivating Persian blue color.

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Blue pottery Tea coasters.

Small serving trays.

Blue pottery photo frames.

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Soap dishes in geometrical designs.

Various products in Blue Pottery.

Tiles in floral motifs.

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Design

The craft was initially used for decorating the temples, mosques and palace. With new interventions and market demands whole new range of products were introduced. Today artisans make all sort of possible things in blue pottery along with the traditional product.

Product range from Surahi (arrow necked water jugs), flower vases, cylindrical jars, plates, small bowls, ashtrays, essence holder, lamp stands, coasters, mirror frames, soap dishes, paper weights, T-light holder, photo-frames, napkin rings, boxes for trinkets, beads, ear rings, knobs, hangers, decorative wall hangings, games, cups, mugs, tea sets, snacks tray, glazed tiles and games.

Artisan drawing freehand floral motif on the tea coaster. References of birds to be used as motifs.

Design Resource

Blue Pottery - Jaipur

Art of Blue Glaze Pottery

by
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Ms. Anisha Crasto and Ms. Anushree Kumar
NID, Bengaluru

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/blue-pottery-jaipur/design

Artisans are also making contemporary designs.
A sketch of stylized fish made by an artisan.

Traditional motifs of elephants painted on soap dishes.

Various floral and geometrical designs made on the product.

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Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/blue-pottery-jaipur/contact-details

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