

## **A RE-EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICAL STANCE ON ASSISTED REPRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY VIA HETEROLOGOUS INSEMINATION**

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### **Abstract**

This study re-evaluates the Christian ethical stance on assisted reproduction technology via heterologous insemination otherwise known as artificial insemination by donor (AID). The Theories of Rational Choice and Consequentialism were adopted in this study. This study employed both the primary and secondary means of data collections. The relevant generalisations and conclusions were drawn purely on the gathered data made through hermeneutical and phenomenological approaches. Findings exposed that there is no unanimous consensus on the issue of heterologous insemination by the Christian ethicists and churches. Whereas Christian ethicists from some denominational churches like the Roman Catholics outrightly condemns it as unnatural, evil and sinful; others approach issues pertinent to it with ambivalence and rather opt for the homologous insemination. Yet, Christian ethicists from other denominational and protestant churches like the Anglicans embrace it under the marriage union: Various married couples are however passing through traumatic experiences owing to Infertility. This study advocates for the Christian churches cum universal acceptance of heterologous insemination on the basis that it is not outrightly condemned in the bible which is the major source of Christian Ethics; it is a means of honourably actualising and enhancing God's creative order and mandate; the perceived social problems it creates are rather subjective; it is a decent means of overcoming infertility via genuine medical regimen; someone's husband sperm may not prove effective under Artificial insemination by Husband (AID) and for the fact that it represents making the best out of a chaotic situation: Moreover, the churches that condemn it equally resort to it in secrecy. This study also advocates that religious institutions should embrace heterologous insemination and aid in the public campaign for its general acceptance. Government of nations should endeavour to assist in reducing the cost of the procedures for heterologous insemination at affordable prices; as well as enhance easy access to it by all and sundry.

**Keywords:** Assisted Reproduction Technology, Heterologous Insemination, Christian Ethics, Infertility, Couples, Medical, Conception.

### **Introduction**

Procreation is a gift and blessing from God. Hence Maxwell (2002) renders it in Psalm 127:3-5 thus:

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate. (p. 731).

Some families and couples all over the world pass through traumatic experiences as a result of childlessness or infertility. Katiyar (2013) for instance, exposts that the social stigma attached to childlessness in India is a torturing experience to childless couples. He intimates that it is

almost a curse to be childless in India. He describes the social stigma as tremendous and excruciatingly embarrassing: It is equally perceived as social problem in India; which drives many to contemplate suicide, divorce or remarriage. Gouni, Fedosejeva, Akik, Holopainen and Calleja-Agius (2022), Rouchou (2013) and Assimwe, Osingada and Mbalinda et al (2022), point out that childlessness has been viewed with negative connotations due to its potential impact on the survival of the human species. They maintain that mostly in developing countries there are social stigma, detrimental psychological effects, and loss of economic security that results from infertility.

Esan, Nnamani, Ogunkorode, Muhammad, Oluwagbemi and Ramos (2022), Ojukwu and Ibekwe (2020), Rasak and Oladipo (2017) and Aondofa (2023), note that even in Nigeria, infertility adversely affects the quality of life of couples. Male partners often abandon their female counterparts or treat them sometimes to domestic violence because of infertility. They explicate that the Nigerian societal construct is not supportive of couples facing fertility problems.

The invention of the Assisted Reproduction Technology Pertinent to Artificial Insemination to contain infertility among human kind is a huge breakthrough. However, certain cultural and religious settings still perceive it as either an aberration or sin and evil inclined especially the Heterologous insemination. There still abounds huge gap in the general acceptability and embracement of Artificial Insemination. Shifa and Dekal (2020) that carried out a study of awareness on artificial insemination among medical college students in Saveetha Medical University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India: Note with dismay that a good number of these future medical Doctors knew about the basics of Artificial Insemination with less awareness on its technical aspects, legal and ethical implications. They thus advocate for the inclusion of artificial insemination as a form of infertility management in the curriculum of medical students as it will aid in its increasing awareness among students of medicine who will equally aid in spreading its knowledge for easy acceptability among the world populace.

Obajimi, Ogunbode, Adetayo and Ilesanmi (2017), and Ugwu, Odoh, Obi and Ezugwu (2014) that carried out research on the acceptability of artificial insemination by donor among infertile woman attending the Gynecological clinic of the University Collage Hospital Ibadan and Enugu respectively, report a low acceptance rate for Heterologous Insemination. They record that most of them were not even conversant with the process of Artificial Insemination at all. They note that socio-cultural factor, ignorance, religious conviction, fear of contracting an infection, as well as the fear of possibility of failure of the procedure were the major reasons for their reluctance in embracing Artificial Insemination. They advocate for the increase in health education and public enlightenment in order to enhance awareness and dispel the misconceptions about heterologous insemination or AID in the contemporary society of Nigeria.

In the same vein Igbolkwu, Mkperedem, Arisukwu, Uwadinma-Idemudia, Iwuh and Olawale (2023) and Adesiyun, Ameh, Avidime and Muazu (2011), note that in the South-West and Northern Nigeria respectively, regardless of the technological or educational prowess that led to Artificial Insemination and its corollary awareness by a good number of people, some religious denominations and cultural practices do not support artificial insemination. Besides, knowledge on the specifics of treatment was low; and the perception on some of the practices was unfavourable. They advise that medical ethics should take cognizance of the religious and cultural ideals, ideas and principles of the society in which they are practiced.

Pertinent to these backdrops, it is obvious that irrespective of the fact that Artificial Insemination especially via AID is a very good option for combating infertility; religious beliefs and social world views still serves as an obstacle to the majority of people's embracing of its curative stance especially in Africa and Nigeria as already posited. Truth remains that infertility still affects more than 10% of the world's population as registered by Rouchou (2013): Whereas Balen and Bos (2009) expose beforehand in clear figures that approximately 70-80 million couples worldwide are infertile; and it can be estimated, as they affirm, that tens of millions of couples are primary infertile or childless. World Health Organization (WHO) (2023) streamlines that around 17.5% of the world adult population, that is to say roughly 1 in 6 worldwide experience infertility.

The afore-stated assertions clearly indicates, the urgent need for Christian ethicists and Churches, cum various cultural backgrounds to embrace Artificial Insemination by AID and to equally aid in the public enlightenment campaign for its acceptance. Since the bible which is the major source of Christian ethics does not expressly forbid nor condemn Artificial Insemination: Whereas a good number of couples all over the world are passing through the trauma and peril of infertility. The government of various nations should foster and facilitate the access to affordable, high-quality fertility care pertinent to homologous insemination or AID for those in need. This is the objective of this study.

### **The process of Heterologous Insemination or AID**

Heterologous Insemination equally known as Artificial Insemination by a Donor (AID) is one out of the two types of Artificial Insemination. The other type is the Artificial Insemination by the Husband (of a peculiar married lady) (AIH).

Heterologous Insemination involves ovarian inducement with hormones and the formulation of the semen sample (from the donor) in the laboratory, where the sperm with the best mobility and morphology is collected. The final step is to place the sperm inside the woman's uterus at the optimal moment in the ovarian cycle. Girexx (2023) indicates that the preparation for Artificial Insemination by donor (AID) is the same as for Artificial Insemination by Husband (AIH): The only difference lies in the fact that the assisted reproduction technique in AID uses a frozen semen sample from the sperm bank (that is of a donor).

Nall (2023) and Ombelet and Robays (2015), expound that AID is a fertility procedure in which frozen donor sperm is deliquesced and slipped into a person's uterus particularly around the time of ovulation, in order to achieve a pregnancy. The donor sperm can be obtained from a known person or from a clinic recruited one. They stipulate that the sequence of events leading to the contemporary Artificial Insemination traces back to scientific studies and experimentation many centuries ago. Ombelet and Robays intimate that modern techniques used in human Artificial Insemination procedures are mostly adapted from the operation on cattle by dairy farmers wishing to improve milk production by using Artificial Insemination with sperm of selected bulls with well handpicked genetic traits. They affirm that the main reason for the renewed interest in Artificial Insemination in human was connected with the refinement of washed motile spermatozoa in the early years of in vitro fertilization (IVF).

### **Re-Evaluating the Christian Ethical stance on Heterologous Insemination**

The Holy Bible, as Long (2013), Brown (2017) and Grudem (2018), elucidate, is the major source and standard for Christian ethics. Thus irrespective of the various Christian ethicists views, along with the various Churches denominational doctrinal injunctions on Artificial

Insemination pertinent to heterologous insemination; the biblical stand in addition to Love induced (apposite to Agape and Loving one's neighbor as one's self), sound, rational, realistic and justifiable perceptions will be upheld by this study.

According to the Catholic Dictionary (2023), the Roman Catholic Church upholds that Artificial Insemination constitutes a violation of the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of marriage since it is contrary to the natural and divine law. Thornton (1986) notes that the position of the Roman Catholic Church on Artificial Insemination was first declared to the world in 1957 by Pope Pius XII who perceives the conjugal act as having a natural and God-given design that joins the love-giving dimension with the life-giving dimension. Thus on that basis, they rejected both contraception and Artificial Insemination and a fortiori, in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer.

Thornton (1986) however points out that Roman Catholic moral theologians permit "Imperfect Artificial Insemination" (p. 58); which is the use of a syringe to introduce the semen as far as possible into the uterine canal by the couple themselves. All other forms of artificial insemination (Both AIH and AID) have been condemned because of involvement of masturbation; it was perceived as a mechanical adultery especially in heterologous insemination and the irresponsibility of the donor fathering a child for which he can fulfill no paternal responsibility. Cook (1988) intimates that some Roman Catholic moral theologians like Revd. Fr. McCormick S.J., maintains that the Roman Catholic stance on artificial insemination relative to AID is not holistic; is not down to earth; failed to consider the fact that medical interventions to overcome sterility are precisely manifestations of the love between husband and wife; and the fact that the stance is too subjective and dogmatic; hence they refused to embrace the Roman Catholic stance on artificial insemination.

Thornton (1986) elucidates that some protestant churches, however, are divided on the issue of artificial insemination. While some approach it with ambivalence; some however embrace AIH and are not convinced on the moral justification of AID. There are other protestant churches that strictly condemn artificial insemination as being sinful. Citing James Hefley, Thornton avers that the Lutheran church of America as well as the United Presbyterian Church approves sperm donation on the grounds that it is geared towards facilitating procreation and militating against the extinction of mankind. The Lutheran church of America insists that the decision for artificial insemination rests with the persons who are involved.

Pertinent to the divided opinion of some protestant churches on artificial insemination, Joseph Fletcher, a professor emeritus of Episcopos Theological School (affiliated with Harvard University), (cited by Thornton, 1986) holds that artificial methods of reproduction are inherently superior. He argues as Thornton posited that artificial insemination is natural since it is productive, efficient and equally works; if not, the reverse would have been the case. Charles R. Smith, a Grace Brethren Professor at Grace Theological Seminary (cited by Thornton), however, asserts that AIH does not raise any serious ethical considerations. Thus is preferable and morally sound.

In the same vein, Schenker (2005) equally submits that the attitude toward reproductive practice varies among Christian groups. He also stresses that while assisted reproduction is not accepted by the Vatican, it may be practiced by protestant, Anglican and other denominations. He declares that in traditional Christians ethics, the embryo wields moral status right from the conception as a human being; hence most assisted reproductive technologies are forbidden in

their ethics. Sallam and Sallam (2016) reiterate that in recent times, assisted reproduction is total unacceptable to the Roman Catholicism and her ethics, whereas Protestants, Anglican and Coptic Christians accept most of its forms which do not involve gamete or embryo donation. He affirms that orthodox Christians are less strict than the Roman Catholic Christians in their ethical perception of assisted reproduction technology; but however, refuse third party involvement.

Grudem (2019) declares that infertility has been a source of deep sorrow for both men and women in the bible, citing the following, biblical passages – Genesis 11:30; 16:1, 21:1-7, 29:31; Judges 13:2; 1 Samuel 1:2-18 and Luke 1:7, 57-66. He affirms that overcoming infertility is equally pleasing to God; citing Psalm 113:9; Exodus 23:26; Deuteronomy 7:14; Isaiah 54:1 and Galatians 4:27 of the bible. He thus concludes that in principle, the teachings of the bible present no moral objection to a married couple using any sort of the artificial insemination, as long as no human embryos are destroyed in the process: He insists that artificial insemination is simply enabling an infertile husband and wife to overcome their infertility and thereby experience the blessing of having children. Grudem additionally justifies his stance by asserting the following: That modern medicine in general is a Divine blessing that is morally good hence Jesus Christ healed all that were sick which includes those that are infertile (Luke 4:40, Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 24:1); and that human kind should treat an unborn child as a Human person from the moment of conception (Psalm 39:13, Psalm 51:5, Genesis 25:22-23), and finally that artificial insemination actually treats the sperm as being already a living human being.

This study is of the view that artificial insemination irrespective of the kind, especially heterologous insemination; should be embraced as a morally sound regimen: This should be embraced within the confines of the marriage union. The Christian churches should embrace it since the bible does not expressly condemn it. The concept and technology for artificial insemination did not exist when the Bible was written and Even though the bible does provide guidelines regarding the creation of new life: Adam was created with sand, Eve was created via Adam's ribs, while the rest of mankind was created through conception. Artificial insemination is of divine intuition. It is not even a sin for it is not geared towards satisfying lustful desires of the flesh rather to solve a problem which can endanger the survival of humanity and may lead to possible human extinction.

Since the Christian church accepts that married persons can adopt and train a child as their own and whereas the Christian church equally condones blood transfusion by a known and an unknown donor as well; there is no reason on earth for the church not to embrace heterologous insemination which even makes the child properly one's own. The case of AID facilitating possible incest in the future is actually a fallacy, ignorant oriented and superfluous. The sperm having gone through series of treatments to effect perfect fertilization rules that off. Besides, all human being proceeded from the same source which is Adam and Eve. Moreover, condemning artificial insemination with special reference to heterologous insemination in the public while embracing and adopting it behind the scenes or in secret is highly hypocritical and equally constitutes the worst sin ever.

### **The Rational Choice Theory**

Ogu (2013) expatiates that the rational choice theory is argued to have developed as part of the behavioural revolution in American political science of the 1950s and 1960s which sought to inquire how individuals behaved, adopting empirical approaches. The theory according to Ogu, was first applied by Anthony Down (1957) apposite to the field of political science.

Clarke and Felson (2017) explicate that rational choice theory postulates that individuals use their self-interests to make choices that will provide them with the greatest benefit. People weigh their options and make the choice they think will serve them best. Every choice that is made by individuals according to this theory is completed by first considering the costs, risks and benefits of making that decision.

Amadae (2023) intimates that rational choice theory is equally referred to as rational action theory or choice theory. Amadae avers that it is a school of thought based on the assumption that individuals choose a course of action that is most in line with their personal preferences. Ganti (2023) includes that rational choice theory states that individuals use rational calculations to make rational choices and achieve outcomes that are aligned with their own peculiar objective. He declares that employing rational choice theory is perceived to always result in outcomes that provide people with the greatest benefit and satisfaction, in the face of the limited option they have available.

This theory is appropriate for this study in that it implies taking the best rational decision in order to make the best alternative out of a supposed tragic or difficult situation or predicament. Instead of staying childless and passing through inexplicable trauma with societal aspersions attached therein; it is much better to opt for heterologous insemination. Most people that have not experienced the pains and trauma of infertility cum childlessness with the societal embarrassment and harassment associated with it may be of a different opinion to embracing heterologous insemination.

The rational choice theory facilitates; taking rational decisions, is result oriented, does not support causing chaos in the society, but rather is geared towards brainstorming an individual out of perplexity and a situation that would have led to self-pity, self-destruction and even suicide cum tragedy. No one will give any human person a trophy for choosing to please a society or church denomination that is not considerate, sympathetic and empathetic pertinent to such a person's plight.

### **The Theory of Consequentialism**

Cain (2023) underscores that consequentialism refers to a family of ethical theories which judge the morality of a given action based on its consequences. According to him, the theoretical framework of consequentialism proposes that good outcomes are preferable to bad ones; that joy is preferable to sadness: And more so, that consequences should be measured accordingly. Thus the basics of this theory are that one must consider the moral effects of actions before engaging in them. It equally promotes actions that are positively inclined which yields good effects.

Bergstrom (1996) expositis that consequentialism is usually proposed as a theory of rightness and not as a decision procedure or method of deliberation. He points out that it is referred at times to as utilitarianism. An action then can be referred to as being consequentiality inclined when it produces only good results as much as possible.

Bentham Jeremy according to Sinnott-Armstrong (2023) is the major proponent of this theory. He expounds that consequentialism is the view that normative properties depend only on consequences. It embodies the basic intuition that what is best or right is whatever makes the world best in the future, because past events cannot be altered, hence brooding over the past is a venture in futility. Sinnott-Armstrong declares that the most prominent example of this theory

is hinged on consequentialism about the moral rightness of acts, which holds that whether an act is morally right depends only on the consequences of that act or of something related to that act, such as the motive behind the act or a general rule requiring acts of the same kind. This study strictly bases its arguments on consequentialism on the moral rightness of acts which effects positive outcomes as Sinnott-Armstrong streamlined.

One must understand that consequentialism is not just relegated to the understanding that “the end justifies the means”; but rather it equally insists that the right channel of action must be appropriated in order to witness good outcomes. Consequentialism bothers on both the right course of actions as well as the best possible result. It presupposes that one should take the best right course of action for that alone will equally yield the best result for all. Consequently, this study affirms that heterologous insemination is still the best choice of action for couples that are childless and battling infertility.

In a situation wherein AIH proves ineffective, heterologous insemination or AID is the best option for couples because it is geared towards actualizing a good course. It breaks the bondage of infertility; it brings joy to the couples by saving them from childlessness; the donor donates his sperm voluntarily and happily; the medical practitioners that operates its peculiar process does so as not only duty bound and in serving humanity, but also in saving lives, saving marriages and aiding in the procreation process which is one of the major divine commands and mandate to human kind. No harm or evil is done in the process; it yields the best desired result for the couples involved and humanity at large.

### **Proposal for the Universal Acceptance of Heterologous Insemination**

This study pertinent to all that have been realized so far, advocates for the universal acceptance of heterologous insemination in view of the following grounds;

- **The apprehended social problems that it may cause are rather subjective, stems from ambivalence and naivety, ignorant oriented, superfluous and unsubstantiated:** Some of the social problems raised in apprehension as portrayed by Thorton (1986), Cain (1969), Baetens, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, Devroey and Steirteghen (1995) and Negrut and Pop (2022), which include among others; marital problems, enforcing same sex marriage, encouraging single parenting, incest in ignorance, are not sufficient to discredit heterologous insemination. The fact is that every good invention can always be used for evil activities by those inclined to evil: The Information Communication Technology (ICT) which is actually positive oriented is being utilized to facilitate untold evils in the contemporary world. That something invented for good is being used to appropriate evil by some miscreants should not discredit such invention. The bible is even used for witch hunting and deception. The case for adultery holds no water: Just like the case for heterologous insemination fostering incest is baseless since the semen in question has passed through some treatment sequence. Besides, Hamamy (2012) and Agha (2016) register that consanguinity which is marriage between blood relations and siblings, is a deeply rooted social trend among one-fifth of the world population mostly residing in the Middle East, West Asia, North Africa, as well as among emigrants from these communities recently residing in North America, Europe and Australia. They aver that consanguineous marriages remain the preferred choice among rural Pakistan’s, explicating that these marriages are central to the kinship system and are used to strengthen ties within the kin group. Are they to be judged as committing incest?

- **Heterologous insemination is not outrightly condemned by the bible:** The bible which is the major standard for Christian ethics does not outrightly condemn AID. This study has equally realized so far that there is nothing sinister, evil and antagonistic pertinent to AID. It is only but a means to battling infertility, saving marriages, bringing joy and fulfillment to couples and aiding in the advancement and procreation of human kind.
- **There is nothing ominous, deprave or vile involved in the process of actualizing as well as in the ultimate end of heterologous insemination:** The perception that the process of retrieving sperm for use in heterologous insemination is immoral, is actually a preconceived notion. The stimulation of the male private organ involved therein is not geared towards satisfying a lustful desire or committing any act of immorality. This study perceives discrediting heterologous insemination as being immoral on the grounds of masturbation involved in the process of semen retrieval therein as an act of obscenity bothering on an individual's mindset that should be completely discouraged, and obliterated from such a person's thought with the goodwill and ingenuity of assisted reproduction technology.
- **It is an act of dexterity, tenacity and diligently reverting a personal crisis to good fortune:** There is no gain saying the trauma that childless couples experience. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, misery and agony; childless couples should opt for heterologous insemination as this will thwart their sorrows into joy. This serves as an honourable way of overcoming infertility without creating corollary social problems. This is equally one of the propositions of the theories of rational choice and consequentialism adopted in this study.
- **Irrespective of the fact that heterologous insemination may not claim one hundred percent effective; nothing is actually perfect in the universe:** Opting for heterologous insemination is actually better than doing nothing. Both natural and artificial courses pose their peculiar strands of imperfection. Most cases of infertility are of natural causes as posited in Genesis 30:22, 1 Samuel 1:5-6 and Isaiah 66:9, as well as by FIV Lleida (2017) and Cleveland (2023); these portrays nature's imperfection. Some people give birth to imbeciles which is equally an element of imperfection of the natural course. Irrespective of the fact that heterologous insemination may not prove effective in some infertile cases, it is however not enough to discredit its gains and potency: Yeh and Selbel (1987), Dixon and Buttram (1976) and Nall (2023), all declare that heterologous insemination is actually potent, effective and productive.
- **There is nothing medically unethical, absurd and unscrupulous regarding heterologous insemination:** I. Ezebialu, C. Ezenyeaku and O. Umeononihu (Personal Communication, October 8th, 2023), that were equally gynecology specialists in the medical field intimate that couples can even arrange for trusted persons that will serve as semen donors for the AID. Couples are also privy to the genetic information of the semen donor if they are not the ones that actually arranged for such. The whole processes involved are actually handled by qualified and ethically sound specialists in gynecology.
- **Accepting only the homologous insemination is not an objective and judicious resolution:** The Irish Catholic Bishops conference (2008), Cha (2018), and Claes and Hilevych (2022), confirm that while some protestant churches embrace only homologous insemination (AIH) on the grounds that it involves specifically the husbands semen; some denominational churches like the Roman Catholic church perceives it as being only reprehensible, yet morally unacceptable since it does not



follow the natural course of procreation as ordained by God. This study affirms that it is pretentious to accept only the homologous insemination. The heterologous insemination should be embraced by all Christian denominations as well.

- **Heterologous Insemination process is Love in action:** Christian Ethics focuses on Love together with altruism as Nmah (2012) asserts. Mankind should embrace not only the homologous insemination, but heterologous insemination as well. This study submits that all pertaining to artificial insemination are propelled by Love and altruism. It is conceived in the process of seeking solution to infertility which threatens human's very existence and has caused sadness, pains, trauma and tragedy in the lives of innumerable couples worldwide. Mankind should be appreciative of the ingenuity of artificial insemination.

### Conclusion

This study having re-evaluated the Christian ethical stance on heterologous insemination, affirms that it is not an immoral regimen; there is equally no valid and substantiated social problem associated with it. Therefore, it advocates for the universal acceptance of heterologous insemination both in the religious and secular spheres, since the challenges of infertility cannot be underestimated.

This study underscores that subsequent studies can still be undertaken in lieu of this peculiar topic: Thus it holds tenaciously to the objectivity of its resolutions. This study as much as it disagrees with some Christian ethicists and denominations stance on artificial insemination apposite to heterologous insemination, does however respect their opinions and accords them the benefit of its subjectivity. The resolutions of this study if embraced without prejudice will save marriages, save lives and equally go to a long extent in combating the trauma and agony of infertility among couples in the contemporary epoch.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered in order to buttress the findings and resolutions of this study:

- Heterologous insemination should only be undertaken strictly by married persons (that is between couples of opposite gender). It should be legally forbidden for homosexuals.
- Couples engaging in it (especially the females) should keep their emotional stance in check in order not to become emotionally attached to the donor wherein he is known to them.
- The government of various countries in the world should regulate or subsidize the cost of artificial insemination so that everyone in the society can easily afford it. It should be made available and accessible to all and sundry.

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