

Maneuvering Colonial and Postcolonial Resistances with Poetry: A Comparative Study of Nazrul and Walcott

Md. Abu Saleh Nizam Uddin^{1*}, Shah Mohammad Sanaul Karim²,
and Mohammad Riaz Mahmud³

^{1,2,3}International Islamic University Chittagong, Chattogram, Bangladesh

*correspondence: nizam_cu13@iiuc.ac.bd

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to place poems by Kazi Nazrul Islam of Bangla literature in a comparative study with those by the Caribbean poet Derek Walcott. Nazrul wrote when his country India was under British colonial rule and Walcott wrote when his Caribbean region was under British colonialism and in postcolonial period. The study becomes inevitable against a backdrop where comparative studies of Nazrul have been conducted with American and European authors who lack similar colonial backgrounds. Additionally, when Nazrul is compared with non-American and non-European authors, his Islamic identity, which transforms into his all-embracing humanity, is often omitted or sidelined. Thus, when poems by Nazrul and those by Walcott are in a comparative study, the two poets from two different marginalized nations exhibit conspicuous affinities in their poetic resistances. This is how this paper looks forward to doing a comparative study of the poems by Nazrul and those by Walcott by adopting the methods of Traditional Literary Criticism and a new comparative study as shaped by Zepetnek. The results which the study yields are that the poets maneuver identical poetic resistances by addressing the nation's unity, revival of history, composition of unique literature, concern for the working-class people, and anti-colonial struggle. The results of the research may contribute to raising cultural awareness among marginalized nations about resisting aggression.

Keywords: Derek Walcott, humanity, Kazi Nazrul Islam, poetic resistance, religio-linguistic hegemony

INTRODUCTION

Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), the national poet of Bangladesh, is known as the Rebel Poet of Bangla literature. In separate comparative studies with American, Irish, and Martinique authors, Nazrul is critiqued concentrating on the poets' spirit of freedom, spiritual self, and rootedness in native identity. However, doing comparative studies of Nazrul with non-American and non-Western poets is more logical because they offer similar colonial settings. While doing such studies, it is pertinent to look at Nazrul's confident Muslim identity and its manifestation through his all-inclusive humanity. Accordingly, Nazrul may be viewed and the befitting author to do the comparative study with is perhaps Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott (1930-2017) of the West Indies.

Notably, the term "Rebel Poet" seems to be insufficient for Nazrul if, as a whole, the poet's genius and contributions are considered. A rebel conventionally provides the idea that he opposes, or fights against an authority. The cause, for which he fights, may or may not be



justified. He may or may not be very powerful. However, Nazrul was a poet who fought for justice all his life. Besides, his literary works are immensely powerful and remarkably comprehensive. This is how when Nazrul gave unalloyed efforts to uphold justice, especially with the struggle to uproot British colonizers from India, and endeavors with his robust poetry to serve humanity in whatever way he could, the term “Rebel Poet” became too insufficient.

In retrospect, Nazrul was born in 1899 in India under British colonial rule but died in 1976 in independent Bangladesh which had to achieve independence twice at first, from the British colonizers in 1947 as a part of Pakistan, then from Pakistan in 1971 as Bangladesh. Nazrul’s poetic life commenced with the publication of the short story “*Bounduler Atmakahini*” (“Life Story of a Vagabond”) in 1919 (Kamal, 2021, n.p.). Tragically enough, the poetic life ended when on 10 July 1942, the poet was in a children’s program on All India Radio, Calcutta, and suddenly fell sick, permanently losing his power of speech (Kamal, 2021, n.p.). During his active poetic life of twenty-three years, he saw British colonial attempts to cause hatred between Hindus and Muslims, meant to destroy the nation’s unity in order to weaken the struggle for freedom. He noticed colonial aggression on native linguistic history expressed through aggression on the Persian language itself, and Persian and Arabic words remaining in Bangla vocabulary. The poet observed the declining strength of Bangla literature due to the lack of novelty, the tragic plight of the working-class people representing the majority of the natives, and above all, the British colonial torture of the colonized.

Derek Walcott was born in 1930 in a British colony, Saint Lucia, of the West Indies, and died in 2017 when Saint Lucia and other island states of the West Indies were already independent. His first publication was a self-arranged one. It was a collection of poems titled *25 Poems* published in 1949. But his first literary creation to introduce him into the international arena was the collection of poems *In a Green Night: Poems 1948–1960* published in 1962. The title of the book indicates Walcott wrote his first poem in 1948. Breathing his last in 2017, his poetic life comprises a period of sixty-nine years, much longer than Nazrul’s. As from the British colonizers, most Caribbean islands achieved independence in the 1960s and his Saint Lucia in 1979, Walcott saw both colonial and post-colonial disasters and misery. Like Nazrul, he saw possible disunity in his nation, endangered history by being physically apart from ancestral Africa, the absence of unique Caribbean literature, the misery of the poor fishermen who form the majority among the native Caribbean, and colonial and post-colonial hegemonies of naked or deceptive nature

Nazrul and Walcott are from different nations and different times, the former being a Bangladeshi poet with colonial experience and the latter a Caribbean with both colonial and post-colonial experiences. But they resemble figuring out the areas their poetic resistances address in their respective contexts. Thus, this study aims to explore the similarities in maneuvering their poetic resistances that feature attempts at the unity of the nation, construction of historical consciousness, unique literary creativity, service to the working-class people, and anti-colonial ventures. Here, in the translated version, some notable poems and songs by Nazrul are comparatively studied with some widely-discussed poems by Walcott. Walcott’s Nobel Lecture is also included because of its being full of poetic dimensions.

When a review of literature for the present research was done, we found a comparative study of Nazrul that has been done with the American poet, Whitman, to explore the poets’ poetic concentrations to serve humanity. More specifically, the research aims at showing how, in their respective contexts and times, they uphold humanity which is significantly relevant even today (Tajuddin & Huda, 2015). To critique the research, we find Whitman’s humanity is concerned with the value of freedom as a birthright of mankind in general. At the same time, his concern for humanity does indicate the freedom of America from Britain. But there is a truth inherent in the historical fact of American independence in 1776. The truth is that the white Americans themselves, who claim independence from the British occupation, were the occupying side for the native indigenous Americans. So, in Whitman’s voice of humanity, there is a touch of paradox. Unlike Whitman, Nazrul represents the indigenous native Indians who have the most painful experience of British colonial occupation of almost two hundred years.

Therefore, for Whitman and Nazrul, perhaps service to humanity has not been the same. Thus, the comparison of Nazrul with Whitman, as done by the research, becomes arguable.

Comparative studies of Nazrul have also been done with European poets. Such research studies Nazrul in comparison with the Irish poet, Yeats. The study argues that Nazrul and Yeats serve humanity, and uphold nationalism, spiritual freedom, and anti-colonialism (Geeti & Habibullah, 2016). The study views that the poets, reflecting common traits of all nations, manifest internationalism. While thus critiquing, the research finds Nazrul and Yeats as firmly rooted in Islam and Catholicism respectively, and associated with socialism. But no matter how much the research claims Yeats and Nazrul experience the same British colonialism in their respective societies, we argue that Yeats's experience has been less agonizing than Nazrul's. The affinities in terms of language, history, culture, religion, and climate have been there between England and Ireland more or less. The affinities, for Yeats, must have reduced the pain of being colonized if compared with the pain in India for Nazrul. Thus, the societies Nazrul and Yeats hailed from were perhaps not homogenous prompting to raise questions about the validity of the comparison of the poets.

There has been a study comparing Nazrul with the Martinique poet, Aime Cesaire, where the former represents a nation under British colonial subjugation and the latter French (Hasan, 2021). The study explores the similarity between the two poets in their involvement with the search for origin, attempt at resistance, and struggle for freedom. But, when literature's functional goal is more important than formal, and accordingly, a study has to set its research lens, the study seems to exhaust itself in its too elaborate focus on perspective and theory. Furthermore, like the research by Geeti and Habibullah (2016), the research views Nazrul as a serious upholder of socialism. The study writes, "[Nazrul and Cesaire] were the members of Marxist or communist parties" (Hasan, 2021, p. 86). Rahaman (2022) also finds Nazrul as a poet who struggles to establish "a subaltern globalism" which indicates the poet is a communist or socialist (p. 121). It is true that in the 1920s Nazrul involved himself with Communism. But as men's later condition is his overall identity, we must not ignore that Nazrul, in the 1930s, wrote hundreds of Islamic songs where to solve the economic crisis of the poor, he emphasizes Zakat (an Islamic economic system stating a portion of money to be given by the affluent and the rich to the poor every year which is the latter's right) among Muslims, not Socialism. Moreover, in his Islamic songs, the poet reflects Sufism meaning a man's profound love for Allah. Embracing a universal spirit is Nazrul's way of serving humanity linked with his origin, literary resistance, and revolutionary zeal which perhaps the research on Nazrul and Cesaire fails to notice.

This being the background of the research, we visualize the research gap in comparing Nazrul with a poet like Walcott. Both the poets have the same colonial experiences mainly by being non-European and non-American. Nazrul directly experiences British colonial torture on his nation. In colonial and postcolonial times, Walcott visualizes oppression and its legacy in the West Indies. We situate Nazrul in his Islamic identity that constructs within him an all-embracing universal self. Thus, the two authors are positioned which they deserve, in their poetic resistances to colonial and postcolonial aggressions, there appears similitude between them in terms of approach to the unity of nation, historical consciousness, unique literary creativity, service to humanity, and anti-colonial struggle.

The purpose of this comparative study is to clarify that colonial and postcolonial aggressions are almost alike in substance despite some explicit differences. For this, the poetic resistances which Nazrul and Walcott's maneuver are the same. The significance of the study is that it may raise awareness among poets and readers about intricate deceptions and inhuman hegemonies of colonial and postcolonial periods. Disappointingly enough, researchers' widely frequented postcolonial studies in the postcolonial world as embedded in mulling over the sorrows of the colonial past. Hasan (2024) rightly questions, "Is postcolonialism all about lamenting and grieving past colonial injustices?" (p.8). In this critical impasse, our research,

for the readers and researchers, may establish a nexus between its findings and the egregious phenomenological experiences of the postcolonially marginalized.

METHOD

To analyze the areas of resistance that Nazrul and Walcott address with their poetry, we adopted the methodology of Traditional Literary Criticism. Actually, “[a]cademic literary criticism ... tended to practice traditional literary history: tracking influence, establishing the canon of major writers in the literary periods, and clarifying historical context and allusions within the text” (Brewton, n.d., “Traditional Literary Criticism”, para. 1). According to this criticism or methodology, “Literary biography was and still is an important interpretive method in and out of the academy; versions of moral criticism” (Brewton, n.d., “Traditional Literary Criticism”, para. 1). Thus, Traditional Literary Criticism has two approaches – the Historical–Biographical Approach and the Moral–Philosophical Approach. The 19th-century French critic H.A. Taine is one of the pioneers of the Historical-biographical approach. This approach advocates analysis of a text based on the life and time of its author. On the other hand, Samuel Johnson and Matthew Arnold are two of the theorists of the Moral–Philosophical Approach. The approach posits that the moral and philosophical aspects of a literary piece are more important than the aesthetic ones. Thus, facilitated by the two approaches of Traditional Literary Criticism, we conducted our research. All the areas of resistance Nazrul and Walcott address with their poetry do reflect poets’ lives and times. Accordingly, the Historical-biographical approach was utilized. The poets’ poetic resistances have the dimensions of morality and humanity. So, those dimensions were analyzed with the Moral–Philosophical Approach.

Retrospectively, by concentrating only on “European literature and later on European and American literature”, Comparative Literature was exhibiting “Eurocentrism” (Zepetnek, 1998, para. 2). So, Zepetnek (1998) introduces means of “a New Comparative Literature” to facilitate comparative study of all the literature of the world with deserving inclusion and equal importance (para. 3). Thus viewing, Zepetnek (1998) appreciates “the emergence of new Comparative Literature journals” in “China (Mainland), Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Spain” and so forth (para. 4). But the problem is in a post-colonial era, a number of countries have become owners of nuclear weapons and they wish to follow Europe and America by dominating the fields of politics, economy, and culture. So, “new Comparative Literature” may give rise to a new complex centrism failing again the goal of compararity in literature.

Yet from *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* by Steven Totosy de Zepetnek, we took into account ten general principles of Comparative Literature because they at least try to deviate away from “Eurocentrism” with a new approach. From those principles, some were adapted to some extent and used as the theoretical foundation for the present research. Thus, we preferred Zepetnek’s First Principle of choosing “how” instead of “what” while doing the comparison (1998, para. 6). We preferred the Second General Principle “to move and to dialogue between cultures, languages, literature, and disciplines” (1998, para. 7). We at last picked the Seventh General Principle of “theoretical, methodological as well as ideological and political approach of inclusion. This inclusion extends to all Other, all marginal, minority, and peripheral and it encompasses both form and substance” (1998, para. 12). The First Principle was applied to delve deep into the major portion of the comparative study of Nazrul and Walcott. It was to find out not in “what” but “how” the poets, in their poetry, are identical in exerting resistances. With Zepetnek’s Second General Principle, we tried to make a comparative exploration of how Nazrul and Walcott address and uphold their respective marginalized literatures in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Their measures of resistance with poetry indicate their recognition of the native literature. The ventures of applying unique literary creativity even showcase their attempts at enriching their literature. Applying the Seventh General Principle, we made use of the suitable approaches of theory, methodology, and politics pertaining to inclusion in order to ensure a thorough portrayal of the marginalized - the colonized of India and the West Indies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Here the explicit connections of the methodologies with the analysis of the findings have been shown with more specification. As has already been mentioned, Nazrul and Walcott, with the help of their poetry, address five similar areas of resistance – unity of the nation, historical consciousness, unique literary creativity, addressing humanity, and anti-colonial spirit. All these areas reflect the poets' biographies and times of subjugation. So, as methodology, the Historical–Biographical Approach of the Traditional Literary Criticism was applied for analysis. Again, the poets' areas of resistance do have inherent morality and humanity as factors more powerful than aesthetic ones. So, to analyze them, we applied the methodology of the Moral–Philosophical Approach of Traditional Literary Criticism. Significantly enough, Zepetnek's First Principle of finding out “how” was utilized for a comprehensive comparative study of the poets with regard to their identical resistances. Zepetnek's Seventh General Principle was also set as a critical lens because it provides the scope of theoretical, methodological, and political advantages of inclusion while concentrating on the marginalized – India of colonial period for Nazrul and the West Indies of colonial and postcolonial periods for Walcott.

Unity of the nation

Nazrul, in a colonial context, realizes the deceptive British colonial policy called “divide and rule” for weakening the Indian nation by causing distance and hostility between Hindus and Muslims, the two major religious communities of India. To the poet, religious wisdom strongly advocates religious harmony among followers of different religions. It is to be felt and implemented more in a country under colonial occupation for the sake of unity which will enable a nation to achieve freedom. In his poem “*Mora ek e brinte dui ti kushum*” or “We are two flowers on the same stalk”, Nazrul writes both Hindus and Muslims in India live under the same sky, the same sun, the same moon, and in the same earth. They are near and dear ones to one another. But men cannot identify near and dear ones in darkness, and accordingly, can consider one another as enemies. Similarly, in a time of illusive confusion or “discursive camouflages” authored by the British colonizers, Hindus, and Muslims cannot understand how close actually they are (Rahaman, 2022, p. 121). Removal of the illusive colonial confusion means the end of darkness and the arrival of daylight unfolding the faces of the near and dear ones resulting in their return to cordial unity which will surely end colonialism. Nazrul stresses the unity between the two communities for the truth of religions and the independence of India. The poet (2013) writes,

We are two flowers on the same stalk-Hindu and Muslim,
The Muslim is the jewel of its eye, the Hindu is its life,
In the lap of Mother sky we swing like sun and moon;
...
Not recognising each other in the night's darkness, we come to blows;
but in the morning we shall know each other as brothers.
We will weep and embrace each other,
we will ask each other's pardon. (trans. by Chatterjee)

Comparing the motherland, India, with mother in “*Kandari Hushiyar*” (“Boatman, Beware”), the poet says that the sons of India, the motherland, are in colonial subjugation and torture. Their common identity is they are the sons of India. When freedom is necessary as humans, it is extremely unwise to prioritize Hindu or Muslim identity that hinders the process of achieving freedom. Nazrul wishes to have leaders who will be free from the deceptive impact of colonialism. Nazrul, in “*Kandari Hushiyar*” as an example, expresses “aspirations for a decolonial leadership”, that “will diminish the inherent tensions between Hindus and Muslims and spearhead a united struggle against colonial rule in India” (Rahaman, 2022, p. 126). This is what Nazrul reveals in “*Kandari Hushiyar*”. He (1997) writes,

Boatman! Today is put to test
 Thy vow for the liberation of thy Mother.
 “Hindus or Muslims, who are they?”
 Well, who doth make the query?
 Boatman! Tell him that there’s being drowned
 Man, son of my Mother! (p. 354, trans. by Hakim)

This is the poet’s attempt at the nation’s unity.

Walcott observes the diverse population of his Caribbean islands, including Africans brought as slaves and Indians as indentured workers. Even in the postcolonial era, he emphasizes the necessity of unity among these varied ethnic groups. So, the poet, in his Nobel Lecture in 1992 when almost all islands are independent, does not forget to encourage people of Indian origin. Walcott pays homage to the Caribbean of Indian origin in the same way he does this to those with African. When truth states that a problem has to be enumerated before its formation and accordingly it has to be solved, Walcott wisely gives effort at diminishing a possible problem of division among the Caribbean nation. Emphasizing unity, the poet’s articulations are to be seen in his Nobel Lecture. Including both the communities with equal love, Walcott (2013) says, “It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments ... Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories” (para. 11). While sonorously decoding his feelings, he observes the pain of both types of people in their being permanently disconnected from their original continents and shattering of histories, which again turns into delight and pride in the Caribbean. The very art of the Caribbean, according to Walcott, is the reorganization and the revival of the pasts both for the Africans and the Indians in the Caribbean. When in a post-colonial setting with a more complex equation, there is immense pressure on smaller nations from the bigger ones, successful survival is a must for the Caribbean nation. Knowing it quite well, Walcott’s voice, with implicit poeticity, stresses his nation’s unity.

Historical consciousness

Nazrul remains firmly attached to his historical background which he gives expression to in his literature. History plays a vital role in shaping the identity of a nation, So, Nazrul emphasizes historical consciousness in order to motivate the colonized Indians to make them conscious about their history and confident about a successful anti-colonial movement. In his poem “*Kandari Hushiyar*” (“Boatman, Beware”), Nazrul remembers the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-Dowla at Palashi or Plassey on 23 June 1757. Through the defeat, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa lost independence to the East India Company of Britain. The defeat at Palashi was really the key factor to the expansion of British colonial rule in most parts of India and even Asia. *Banglapedia* writes,

For the English East India Company, Bengal was the springboard from which the British expanded their territorial domain and subsequently built up the empire which gradually engulfed most parts of India and ultimately many parts of Asia as well. (Banglapedia, 2021a, para. 1)

In “*Kandari Hushiyar*”, the poet says that the sword of Robert Clive, Lieutenant-Colonel of the British force, turned red with the blood of the native at Palashi. Here the poet means the death of hundreds of native soldiers at the hands of the British. Notably, the British Army earned the victory in a way that was conspiratorial or shrewdly political, never heroic. *Banglapedia* writes,

The English won the victory at Palashi owing to the strength of their conspiracy leading to treason within Sirajuddaula's camp. The defeat of the nawab was political and not a military one. (Banglapedia, 2021a, para. 18)

Upholding the history, Nazrul creates the imagery of a boat that faces a storm in the ocean for which the boatman has to be very cautious. Here the boatman is an imaginary leader of the anti-colonial struggle. The poet (1997) writes,

Boatman ! Before thee lies the field of Plassey,
There where the sword of Clive became red
With the blood of Bengalis !
In the near-by Ganges was set, alas !
The Sun of India. (p. 355, trans. by Hakim)

Then, the poet remembers all the freedom fighters who have been hanged or murdered from 1757 till the 1920s and 1930s, his contemporary time. Those martyrs, the poet says, are watching how the present generation is fighting against the colonizers. The poet is optimistic that India will surely achieve its independence. He (1997) writes,

That sun will rise again, red with our blood.
Those who sang of the victory of life on the scaffold
Are present here in spirit to witness
The sacrifice we offer,
This is the Great Ordeal, for the restoration
Of the nation; (p. 355, trans. by Hakim).

Thus, Nazrul utilizes his historical consciousness to reinforce the anti-colonial struggle.

On the other hand, Walcott has to go along an intricate trajectory when he upholds his history. It occurs due to his mixed ancestry emanating from his black grandmothers and white grandfathers. Hence, in “A Far Cry from Africa” of *A Green Night* (1962), he reveals his confused state of mind and writes: “I who am poisoned with the blood of both, / Where shall I turn, divided to the veins?” (1986, p. 18). In the poem, the poet remembers the cruel British colonial aggression on Kenya. However, the poet afterward resolves his confusion regarding self-identity resulting from mixed blood. Its reflection can be found when Walcott gives interview to Edward Hirsch for *The Paris Review* in 1985 and says, “I am primarily, absolutely, a Caribbean writer”, never an English (1986, para. 17). Later in his Nobel Lecture in 1992, he posits, “Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent” (2013, para. 11). The poet wants to mean that Caribbean people have their root in Africa despite their physical separation from the continent. So, when he is “...primarily, absolutely, a Caribbean writer”, his history finds its permanent location in African innocent and panoramic civilization, on which “A Far Cry from Africa” has already been written by the poet. In the poem, the poet (1986) writes,

Threshold out by beaters, the long rushes break
In a white dust of ibises whose cries
Have wheeled since civilization’s dawn
From the parched river or beast-teeming plain. (p. 17)

The poet reminisces how innocent African tribes have hunted animals and birds since time immemorial in the beautiful plain of the continent. With the approach of the hunters, unnumbered white ibises in the river and the plain have been startled and have instantly been flying away into the sky turning the whole environment white with the whiteness of their wings. To Walcott, it has been the history and civilization he belongs to. This is indicated by his overwhelmed stance when describing beautiful Africa. Thus, Walcott simultaneously gives a robust reply to Hugh Trevor-Roper, a British historian of colonial time, who, opining that Africa had no history, stated, “... there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa” and “The rest is largely darkness ...” (as cited in Badawi, 2017, paras. 25-26).

Thus, is available the poet's declaration about himself as a Caribbean poet with roots and history in Africa, Walcott includes this history in "The Sea is History" published in *The Star-apple Kingdom* (1979) and goes further. In the poem, the poet mentions the history of his very own ancestors who, while being brought from Africa across the Atlantic on ships, were thrown into the ocean for their being sick or dead after torture. The poet (1992) writes,

Where are your monuments, your battles, your martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is History. (p. 364)

This is how Walcott manifests history that includes Africa, slavery, and colonial experience which contributes to solidifying the confidence of the Caribbean in colonial and post-colonial settings.

Unique literary creativity

To analyze Nazrul and Walcott's ventures at introducing unique literatures of the marginalized natives under colonial and postcolonial occupations, Zepetnek's Second General Principle was applied too. The methodology facilitated a thorough comparative study of the poets' recognition and enrichment of the native literature victimized by subjugation.

The Modern Period of Bangla literature started in 1800 AD and continues until today, as pointed out by *Banglapedia* (2021). *Banglapedia* further writes that Tagore phase (1890-1930), Post-Rabindra phase (1930-1947), Post-Partition era (1947-1971), and Bangladesh Era (from 1971 onward) are different segments of the Modern Period of Bangla literature.

During the Tagore phase (1890-1930) of the Modern Period, Rabindranath Thakur (not Rabindranath Tagore, to maintain the originality of the name) was the most versatile and influential poet. He has been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. But, if noticed minutely, Thakur has been awarded the Nobel Prize not for his contribution to Bangla literature. It is rather English literature which he enriches, for which he is awarded with the prestigious prize. He translates *Gitanjali*, a collection of his poems, into English with the help of W.B. Yeats, and that translation enables him to win the award. To the Nobel Prize committee, Thakur wins the prize "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West" (The Nobel Prize in Literature 1913, 2024, para. 1). Thus, during the British colonial period of India, he achieves the prize by contributing to English literature. Fanon (1963) opines, "In the colonial context, [native] culture when deprived of the twin supports of the nation and the state, perishes and dies" (p. 177). Thakur, in his case, participates in causing the native Bangla literature to perish and die, far from attempting literary decolonization of it.

There have been authors in Tagore Phase, writing their literary pieces following Thakur. Though the Post-Rabindra phase (1930-1947) consisted of poets and writers upholding a spirit of freedom from colonial subjugation, the 1930s may be called a time when literary figures were Eurocentric besides being Thakurian. To Bandyopadhyay (2018), the literary figures thrive in Kolkata, a city under the overwhelming impact of Thakur. But Nazrul, with his unique pondering over Persian, Arabic, Indian, and Bangladeshi indigenous literature, comes out of Thakur's circle and stops being Eurocentric in a country under British colonial rule. His attachments to Perso-Arabic and Indo-Bangladesh literature do convey internationalism. To Hussain (2022), "[Nazrul's] literary internationalism [is] by no means Europe-unlike the Eurocentric metropolitanism of his contemporaries known as the modernists of the 1930s" (para. 4). Nazrul knows very well that "[t]he colonial situation brings national culture virtually to a halt" (Fanon, 1963, p. 171). Accordingly, he attempts at decolonization with his unique genius. To Uddin (2021), it is "[a] comprehensive decolonization" (p. 153).

Thus, Nazrul gives birth to a new trend in Bangla literature with his unique creative power. Nazrul can do it because it is his natural endowment, even "transcendental" (Langley, 2007, p. 31). With this incomparable aptitude, he gives birth to a new trend in Bangla literature

because he has to empower native literature so that the cultural hegemony of the colonizers can be resisted. As the Palestinian poet Darwish, with the power of his metaphors, engages himself “in shaping Palestinian culture and awareness” to resist Israeli occupation, Nazrul is busy resisting British occupation with his creativity (Al-Sheikh, 2021, p. 80). From numerous examples that exhibit Nazrul’s unique creative power, the song “*He Madinar Bulbuli go gayle tumi kon gazal*” may be focused. In the song, the poet compares Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) with a nightingale in a desert. The manner in which the melodious tune in the song of the nightingale can produce a cheerful environment overcoming the sandy and colorless appearance of the place, in the same manner the Prophet has established love and peace in Arab society with the message of Islam. This is how the poet writes about the Prophet’s success in spreading Islam in Arab and across the world. The poet writes how the Prophet turns the desert into a garden of hope and aspiration where his companions embrace martyrdom with satisfaction. Nazrul writes,

He Madinar Bulbuli go gayle tumi kon gazal
Marur buke uthlo phute premer rangin golap dal.
Duniyar desh-bidesh theke, gaaner pakhi uthlo deke
Muazziner azan dhoni uthlo vedi gagan tal.
Saharar dagdha buke racha tumi Gulistan
Shetha ashab shob vromor hoye shahadater gaylo gaan
Doyel kokil dole dole Allah Rasul uthlo bole
Al-Qur’aner patar kole Khodar namer boylo dhal. (1997, p. 609)

[Translation:

O thou nightingale of Madina!
 What’s that ghazal from the lips of thine
 Which has made the rose of love
 Bloom in the bower of desert wild?
 The song-birds started singing
 In regions far and wide!
 Thro the heights of the ethereal sky,
 Rang the Muazzine’s melodious cry!
 In the Sahara desert, parched and dry,
 Thou had created a garden of flowers
 Where the companions came like bees
 And hummed the hymn of “*La Shareek*”!
 The myriads of song-birds came apace
 And sang the song of Allah and the Prophet!
 Under the leaves of Al-Quran
 Swelled the flood of Love Divine ! (1997, p. 610, trans. by Rahman)]

While conveying the meaning, the poet appears with the stunning power of his unique creativity. We see him mingling Bangla, Arabic, and Persian words in a mellifluous mixture. In the first couplet, *gazal* (a Middle Eastern and sub-continental song and lyric poem), an Arabic word, rhymes with *dal* (group), a Bangla word. The third line contains inner rhyming and the fourth line forms a couplet with the first line as a singer or a reciter repeats the first line after the fourth. Then, again the fifth line couplets with the sixth line while the rhyming words are *Gulistan* (garden), a Persian word, and *gaan* (song), a Bangla word. This is how Nazrul appears in the scene with his extraordinary uniqueness in literary creativity. Islam (2021) writes, “In the 1000-year history of Bengali music, Nazrul was perhaps the most original creative talent” (para. 10). Or, as opined by Langley (2007), “What is certain is that he [Nazrul] wombed within himself a spirit of rebellion and creation that has few peers in literary history” (p. 38). Thus, Nazrul outmaneuvers the British mechanism of removing Muslim presence from Bangla literature which they applied through the attempts to remove Persian and Arabic words from Bangla in 1800 and 1835. While resisting colonial aggression, the poet mixes up poeticity

with intellectuality and replies to the colonizers' linguistic aggression equally. Rahaman (2022) writes,

Nazrul Islam took on the role of a "coloni[z]ed intellectual" (Fanon 236-39), adopted his aesthetics of resistance, and continued to learn how colonialists can be confronted with the very physical and cultural forces they have wielded upon the physical and psychic world of the coloni[z]ed. (p. 124)

In this manner, Nazrul takes Bangla literature to a new height to build cultural confidence among native Bengal people, especially Muslims, to encounter colonial cultural aggression.

One's language is not simply the meaningful combination of some letters to form words that are to construct meaningful sentences. Being concerned with one's culture establishes an inalienable connection with one's views about the world. Ravishankar (2020) opines, "The ways in which we use words and associate them with one another, contain in themselves underlying perspectives of the world from specific cultures" (p. 2). But history provides testimony that colonizers try to uproot the language of the colonized as their cultural aggression for the convenience of their colonial occupation. So, uprooting one's language means uprooting one's "underlying perspectives of the world" (Ravishankar, 2020, p. 2). Therefore, it is "Linguistic violence" "committed against a very culture, one from which it may never fully recover" (Ravishankar, 2020, p. 1).

If the gradual extinction of the language of the colonized at the hands of the colonizer is "[l]inguistic violence", the same tragedy was almost fulfilling to the Bangla language in colonized India. But here the tragedy was more intense by having a touch of colonizers' attempt at exciting religious disharmony and conflicts among the natives. Notably, the Bangla language has always nurtured the usage of Perso-Arabic words since ancient times. In fact, "From ancient times Bengal and Iran had been in contact with each other" because "[t]here was trade between the Indian ports" and the Persian ports like "Ubullu, Omana" (Banglapedia, 2021b, para. 8). With the Persian traders, came "Sufis and darwishes" which resulted in Bengali people's acquaintance with "the QURAN and Sunnah in Arabic, as well as with Persian, the language of the Sufi preacher" (Banglapedia, 2021b, para. 9). Thus, with the passage of time, Perso-Arabic words entered into Bangla vocabulary and enriched it conspicuously. Quoting Sofa, Uddin (2021) finds 'the Persian impact on Bangla as "a remarkable turn in a river if language is compared with it" (p. 127). It means, to Sofa, the Persian impact is a natural occurrence in the field of language' (p. 139). So, in Bangla, there was "a legitimate and natural historical context of Persia" (Uddin, 2021, p. 140).

But, by establishing Fort William College in present-day Kolkata at the beginning of the 19th century, the British colonizers, under a predatory pretext, tried to remove Perso-Arabic words from Bangla keeping only Sanskritized ones. Uddin (2021) writes,

[F]ollowing the establishment of the Bengali Department at Fort William College in Calcutta in 1801, the efforts of its head, William Carey, and his associate Bengali scholars, made Bangla fit for fine prose" (Banglapedia, 2021a: para. 12). Actually, it was not an effort to make Bangla "fit for fine prose"; it was rather an effort to remove Persian and Arabic words from Bangla. (p. 141)

The attempt targeted not only the gradual weakening of Bangla but it was also to divide the nation with religious disharmony as Perso-Arabic words of Bangla were more associated with Muslims whereas Sanskrit ones were with Hindus. In fact, 'Fort William College has been seen by many writers as the "origin and fount of linguistic division", part of a colonial plot of divide and rule (Rai 2001, 23)', viewed by Safadi (2013, pp. 38-39). Hence, the hegemony may be termed a religio-linguistic hegemony. The hegemony continued until the 1920s and 1930s, the decades when Nazrul writes. And Nazrul successfully deals with that hegemony with literary uniqueness from his arsenal. Thus, one may see Nazrul's unique literary creativity, and his ability to connect it with wider social and national contexts

Walcott, in his case, arrives with his unique creative talent too. He provides testimony of his unique creative power as he invents *vers libre*, a new type of rhyming and arrangement of meter. *Vers libre* permits various types of rhyming and meter arrangement, facilitating a poet to successfully accommodate all his essential feelings and thoughts in a spontaneous manner. Thus, Walcott came up with his invention to give uniqueness to Caribbean literature that has long been under the impact of iambic pentameter, an English creation. His poems “Parades, Parades” and ‘The Wind in the Dooryard’ of *Sea Grapes* are the two examples where *vers libre* is applied. In “Parades, Parades”, the poet writes,

There’s the wide desert, but no one marches
except in the pads of old caravans,
there is the ocean, but the keels incise
the precise, old parallels
there’s the blue sea above the mountains
but they scratch the same lines
in the jet trails- (1981, p. 72)

Walcott applies his unique creative power to build a unique Caribbean literary arena for constructing a confident Caribbean nation in a world of post-colonial hegemony.

Addressing humanity

In 1757, Nawab Siraj-ud-Dowla, the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, was defeated by the British Force of the British East India Company. Consequently, Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa lost independence. As the Company took the administrative power, within twelve years, there occurred the catastrophic famine of 1769 to continue until 1773 which is known as *Chiattorer Monnontor* or The Great Famine of Bengal. Horribly enough, “[a]s many as ten million people, a third of the entire population, died as a consequence” (Bengal Famine of 1770, para. 1). Natural calamities disturbing the production of crops were responsible for it. Equally or more responsible was the British occupation, that is “[d]rought, bad harvests, and British economic and administrative policies all contributed to its catastrophic proportions” (Bengal Famine of 1770, para. 1).

From the disastrous event of 1769, it is understandable what the British attitude to the natives was like. Predictably, poor working-class people were the worst victims at their hands. The truth is emphasized by Uddin and Ferdous (2014) who write, “It is commonly seen that when colonized, the worst victims are the working-class people” (p. 83). Nazrul, after arriving in the scenario in the 1920s, finds the working-class people under the same tragic circumstances. In “*Daridryo*” (“Poverty”), the poet mentions about the poverty of his own life. The poet writes a poisonous snake has poison in its body. It may die with a bite from another poisonous snake. That means a poisonous snake has self-destructive poison in its own body. Similarly, the poor poet or any poor man is like a poisonous snake carrying poison-like poverty in his own life. In “*Daridryo*”, the poet addresses himself and writes, “Thou art the serpent, born in pain” (1997, p. 417, trans. by Chowdhury). With experience gathered in his own life, the poet truly realizes the pain of poverty that poor people face every day. In “*Krishaner Gaan*” (“The Song of the Peasant”), the poet writes that before the colonial invasion, farmers were happy in their agrarian life. But with the arrival of the colonizers, there occurs misery in their lives. So, in the poem “*Krishaner Gaan*”, the poet appeals to the farmers of Bengal to fight fearlessly against the colonizers with a view to bringing back the past happy days. The poet writes,

Arise, O tiller of the soil,
Hold the plough in your iron grip.
Since we are all going to die
Let us die a glorious death.

We had our fields green with paddy
Our country, once upon a time, was full of laughter.
But the robbers from the shopkeepers' nation
have plundered us bare
Today our misery is endless indeed.
They are plucking out the golden hairs from my mother's head.

...

Arise today, O tiller of the soil,

...

Today, Comrade, we shall make the robber-king bow down and yield. (1997, pp. 334-35, trans. by Chowdhury).

The poet also posits that the native upper and middle class, together with the colonizers, contribute to increasing the suffering of the poor working-class people who are the majority of the Bengal population in India. In "*Kuli-Mojur*" ("Coolies and Labourers"), the poet speaks about an incident in a rail station. The poet mentions that an aristocratic person knocks down a porter to the ground. Seeing it, the poet says,

Tears rushed into my eyes.
Will the poor get beaten like this
Throughout the world and for ever? (1997, p. 309, trans. by Chowdhury).

Then the poet cannot help threatening the whole class of the aristocrat. Though the poet is ostensibly a supporter of Communism at the time of writing the poem, in the very poem the poet defies the socialist viewpoint of a society that gives no room to any class difference. He expresses his opinion that all humans will be equal as human beings despite their differences in terms of affluence, with no shortage of basic needs among the poor. It is perhaps the reflection of Shorif's opinion that "Nazrul was a socialist but not an atheist" (2014, pp. 86-87, trans. ours). Nazrul's being a non-atheist in contradiction with his being a socialist perhaps foreshadows his complete shift to an Islamic solution to poverty in his mature years. In "*Kuli-Mojur*", the poet's implicit opinion states that money and wealth are not enemies; it is rather the approach towards them that matters. Thus, the poet appeals to all the men of the world to be united and equal so that an insult to one by somebody can be a matter of shame for all. In the poem, the poet writes,

You answer that the coolies are paid.
Shut up your lips,
You liars and cheats.
...
Today let us all be equal and free.
...
Let the disgrace of one
Be considered a shame
To the whole of mankind. (1997, pp. 309-11, trans. by Chowdhury)

The poet reaches a global scenario, appeals to "all", and wishes them to "be equal and free", and this he reveals to "the whole of mankind". Here Nazrul is "on behalf of unity and the moral and psychological solidarity" with the poor working-class people of the whole world and appeals to the people of other classes to join him (Langley, 2023, p. 171). In other words, Nazrul is "championing human unity" (Langley, 2007, p. 118). However, in the category of poems that try to give a voice to the poor working class, "*Manush*" ("Man"), "*Chor-Dakat*" ("Robbers and Dacoits"), "*Raja-Proja*" ("Kings and Subjects"), "*Sharbahara*" ("The Lonely Island"), and "*Sromiker Gaan*" ("The Song of the Worker") are some of the other noteworthy poems (1997). In the 1930s, in a mature stage of life, Nazrul wrote hundreds of songs focusing again on poverty at the grass-root level. Here the poet considers Zakat of the Muslim

community as an effective way of a “humanitarian economy” to alleviate poverty (Hoque & Uddin, 2016, p. 44). In the song “*Eid Mobarak*”, the poet writes,

You must empty your heart and
make a gift of yourself
you who are very calculating,
do not sit down to calculate! (1997, p. 470, trans. by Chakravarty)

In the original, in Bangla, it is “*Buk khali kore apnare aj dao Zakat*” (1997, p. 466) meaning “You must empty your heart and / make a gift of yourself”. Here “a gift of yourself” means Zakat. In “*O monramjaner oi Rojarsheshe*” or “O Heart, there comes the happy Eid”, the poet sings,

Spend all your wealth today for the sake of the Lord,
give generous zakat to the dying Muslim,
awaken him from his tragic sleep. (1997, p. 523, trans. by Chowdhury)

By “tragic sleep”, the poet refers to the indifference of those rich Muslims who are careless about their duty of paying Zakat to the poor. Thus, for solving the crisis of poverty, the poet refers to the Islamic economic system for the Muslims while for others he perhaps advocates a human-friendly system that is at least not Socialism or Marxism, far from being Capitalism or “market globalism” (Langley, 2007, p. 102). To clarify further the point of Nazrul’s departure from Marxism or Communism, the poet’s later attachment to Sufism as expressed in many of his songs may be construed. Such a song of Sufism is “*Khodar premer sharab piye behush hoye roi pode*” (1997, p. 535) or “Drunk with the wine of divine love / I am oblivious of all” (1997, p. 536, trans. by Chowdhury).

Thus, Nazrul writes myriads of literary pieces upholding the cause of working-class people like farmers, laborers, and porters. This is the poet’s attempt to resist the onslaughts of the colonizers, upper class, and landlords upon the poor. For Walcott, fishermen are the working-class people, the majority in the Caribbean islands. So, Walcott never turns his face away from those fishermen. In his poems, more often than not, fishermen remain at the center of attention. In the poet’s epic poem *Omeros* (1990), major Caribbean characters are fishermen. They are shown as the fishermen of Walcott’s very own island Saint Lucia. Almost in the shadow of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer, Walcott chooses the story of *Omeros*. Achilles, Hector, and Helen of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the names of the three major characters of *Omeros*. In Walcott’s epic poem, Achilles and Hector are fishermen. However, in many other major poems, Walcott tries to represent the fishermen. In his first personally published collection *25 Poems* (1949), Walcott includes the poem “The Fishermen Rowing Homeward” where fishermen are glorified for their natural wisdom in encountering life and nature. In the poem, the poet writes that fishermen, while returning home from the sea in the dusk, do not bother themselves facing silence and motionlessness in nature, sea, and sky. This confident stance is their confusion-free insight with regard to life and nature. But Walcott seems to say he declines because he cannot possess the power of the fishermen. In the poem, the poet writes,

The fishermen rowing homeward in the dusk,
Do not consider the stillness through which they move.
So I since feelings drown, should no more ask
What twilight and safety your strong hands gave. (as cited in Ford, 2016, para. 1)

Ford mentions various possible meanings of the poem. To Ford (2016), the above-mentioned lines, besides hinting at other meanings, indicate Walcott’s feeling to “envy the fishermen’s stoical lack of reflectiveness” (para. 2). While thus indicating failure and pain, the poet highlights fishermen’s stoic aptitude. In chapter XXVII of *Midsummer* (1984), the poet deplores the fact that the rich men, mostly from Europe and America, are occupying the West

Indian islands with their luxurious villas. The poet writes, “[T]he villas have fenced-off beaches where the native walk” (1986, p. 486). To Walcott, it is not only the physical marginalization of the ordinary Caribbean with fishermen as the majority, but in the region’s overall scenario also it is their marginalization.

Thus, Walcott upholds the Caribbean fishermen. It is the poet’s commitment to save them from misery in a world where capitalistic race is rampant and stronger nations, with local upper classes, make the life of the poor ordinary people difficult and miserable in the whole world.

Anti-colonial spirit

Nazrul has always nurtured and held high his anti-colonial spirit. In this discussion, “*Bidrohi*” or “The Rebel”, among all the literary pieces by Nazrul, is bound to come to the forefront as the most significant poem of the anti-colonial struggle. The poem expresses the tremendous power of destruction meant to build or firm the objective of “deliberate destruction and creation” (Langley, 2007, p. 65). Against the British colonizers in India and all such evil forces elsewhere in the world, the poem is “his political, linguistic, even metrical rebellion all at once” (Hussain, 2022, para. 1). In this poem, the poet declares his head is forever to remain erect, and it never bows down and submits to the British colonial rule. The poet writes, “Say, Valiant, / Say: High is my head!” (1997, p. 12, trans. by Chowdhury). With outright rejection of the British rule which considers itself as God for the native Indian, the poet writes,

Piercing the earth and the heavens,
Pushing through Almighty’s sacred seat
Have I risen,
I, the perennial wonder of mother-earth! (1997, p. 12, trans. by Chowdhury)

In “*Anandamoyer Aghamane*” or “The Coming of Anandamoye”, which is “a galvanic anti-colonial rhetoric” to Rahaman (2022), Nazrul symbolically evokes divine intervention to end the crisis in India caused by the colonizers (p. 121). Here, of course, Nazrul wishes the divine intervention through patriotic Indians. The poet writes, “India today is a butchery-when / will you arrive, O Destroyer?” (1997, p. 608, trans. by Kamal). In response, British rule arrested Nazrul in 1922 and brought a charge of sedition against him. As his statement, the poet writes his famous essay “*Rajbondir Jobanbondi*” (The Statement of a Political Prisoner) on 7 January 1923. The poet, in this statement or essay, writes, “I am the flute to declare the truth of the God. The flute can be destroyed. But who will destroy the God?” (2009, p. 10, translation ours). The poet means human Nazrul can be destroyed but not the truth of God which states that British colonial rule in India is a gross violation of humanity. Habib writes, “Nazrul actually wanted the triumph of truth and expressed in his essay an earnest longing to have an Independent India removing colonialism and its torture” (2009, p. 8, translation ours). However, Nazrul is later sentenced to one-year rigorous imprisonment. While in Hooghli jail, the unstoppable poet writes the song “*Ei shikol pora chol*”. In this song, the poet poetically reveals how the political prisoners and the colonized people will break the shackles while remaining imprisoned in shackles. He also writes their imprisonment is “to erode the fear of all” (Islam, 2010, p. 11).

In the Hooghli jail, protesting against the jail superintendent Mr. Astern’s torture of political prisoners, Nazrul and his friends start a hunger strike. *Anandabazar Patrika*, on 23 May 1923, writes in its editorial that Nazrul continues the hunger strike for forty days and, at one stage, the poet’s physical condition becomes critical, then food is forced through his nose and the poet starts to bleed from his nostrils (Islam, 2010). Thus, the poet, in his entire life, fights against colonialism both physically and poetically because, to him, literature perhaps means an aesthetically conveyed serious affair at the service of humanity, not opportunistic equivocation or amateur aestheticism.

Walcott’s anti-colonial struggle is conspicuous and noteworthy too. For centuries, the islands of the West Indies had been under colonial occupation mostly of Britain and France. In 1958, the West Indies Federation came into being to achieve independence from Britain as a single state. However, because of internal conflicts, the Federation shattered in 1962. The major

islands like Jamaica and Barbados achieved independence in the 1960s. Walcott's Saint Lucia achieved independence in 1979. So, Walcott, who was born in 1930, sees the time when colonial occupation at the physical level starts to loosen. So, Walcott duly fights against the still-existing colonial impacts on the culture, nature, and economy of the Caribbean.

In Chapter VII of "Tales of the Islands", the poet writes about how Caribbean nature is destroyed by the colonizers' commercial activities in the islands. The pools, which are called Maingot by the fishermen remaining between the ocean and the jungle, are full of dirt which is the waste of the colonizers' commercial activities in the plantations. For the same reason, the bamboos of the islands look extremely shabby. Walcott writes,

'Maingot' fishermen called the pool [is] blocked by
Increasing filth that piled between ocean
And jungle, with a sighing grove
Of dry bamboo, its roots freckled with light
Like feathers fallen from a migratory sky. (1992, p.25)

Disappointingly enough, the destruction of nature continues even after the colonial period is over. It happens as the Caribbean economy decides to depend on reckless tourism. The imprudent development policy even tarnishes Indigenous self-reliant strengths like marine fisheries. As a result, on many islands, fishermen find life very harsh. In "The Virgins" of *Sea Grapes* (1976), the poet (1981) shows Virgin Island, one of the islands of the Caribbean, where life moves at a "funeral pace" because normal life of the native people who are fishermen is severely disturbed by tourism (p.17). The poet ironically mentions, "I am reminded / of life not lost to the American Dream" (1981, p.17). He actually means the happy life of the Caribbean destroyed by the American Dream. He means so as the American dream means "the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful and happy if they work hard" and thus success indicates having material possessions to earn happiness with no regard for humanity or true well-being (The American Dream, n.d.). In his Nobel Lecture, the poet mentions how Caribbean culture of varied nature is not represented to the tourists causing "seasonal erosion of their identity" (2013, para. 43). This is how we visualize Walcott's firm anti-colonial stance in a colonial context as well as "in the face of an ever-aggressive and dominant Euro-American economy and culture in post-colonial context" (Uddin, 2015, p. 99).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of the research show that both Nazrul and Walcott are similar in maneuvering their poetic resistances to colonial and post-colonial aggressions, with Nazrul focusing on colonial, and Walcott on both colonial and postcolonial. The poets venture into nation's unity, historical consciousness, unique literary creativity resisting religio-linguistic and linguistic aggressions, service to humanity by upholding the working-class people, and anti-colonial struggle. The findings of the research, besides unearthing Nazrul's inalienable identity and wise functionality as a Muslim poet that gives him a voice of unalloyed humanity, may contribute to raising essential cultural awareness. With this awareness, poets and readers of the world can form ideas about an effective and timeless means of resistance and resilience to aggression. Also, through this research, conscious readers and future critical lenses may explore the inward similitude of colonial and postcolonial hegemonies despite their outward heterogeneity.

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