

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL VALUES IN A TAMIL NOVEL THROUGH HERMENEUTIC METHOD

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the social values highlighted in a Tamil novel namely ‘*Anbin Aarathanai*’ and identify the ways of the social values highlighted in the Tamil novel towards the welfare of society. The sample for this study consisted of two teachers from Raub District, Pahang. The Hermeneutic method using a qualitative methodology was used to interpret the interview transcripts of respondents to obtain their views on the themes and values of the Tamil novel in this study. The findings of the study show that both respondents have given social values that can be identified based on their understanding. Among the values are leadership, affection and love, perseverance, strong identity, giving awareness to teenagers, reading attitude, friendship, courage, belief in customs and religion, concern, love for the Tamil language and priority in the field of education. The values that have been identified can be linked to social issues such as education, economics and social issues experienced by the Indian community which are also featured in this novel. This allows for a more thorough interpretation of the intentions and values of the novel, as well as showing the novel's potential as a valuable tool for self-growth and social change in Indian society. In conclusion, this study shows that the novel ‘*Anbin Aarathanai*’ has potential as a tool to increase awareness and high social value. As an implication of the study, this novel can be used as an example, guide and reflection in solving the social problems faced by the Indian community in Malaysia.

Keywords: Social values, tamil novel, hermeneutic method, interpretation, texts

INTRODUCTION

A novel is a creative work that serves as a medium for the author to express thoughts through written narratives. Srikandi Saemah and Mary Fatimah (2020) also assert that a novel is a narrative literature written in prose form and possesses a complex plot. Various storytelling elements are included in producing a quality novel. Discourse can become dull without context, as it is the context that brings the discourse to life (Nazirah et al., 2020). A well-contextualized novel helps readers understand and visualize social realities. Hence, creative writing in novels conveys the author's thoughts and ideas through themes of love, life, adventure, history, politics, and more. Indirectly, novels play a role as fictional works that present synopses, themes, issues, values, lessons, characters, and characterization.

The novel *Anbin Aarathanai*, written by Suppiah Nachiappan, is a Tamil novel. The author is a professor at a university. This novel was written in 1982 while he was undergoing teacher training at a teacher's college at the age of 21. He highlighted the importance of social values in society through this novel, based on his own life experiences. The novel explores the theme of love and service to the Indian community in the struggle for educational rights for future generations, aimed at the progress of the Indian society. Aligned with this theme, the novel also contains social values that influence personality and shape individuals with high moral character. ‘*Anbin Aarathanai*’ tells the story of a trainee teacher committed to change the destiny of underprivileged students in an Indian estate by helping educate them. The main character is supported by several secondary characters who help develop the plot. Events in the novel include locations such as Indian estates, a teacher training college in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, and a home in Perak. The author clearly described these main locations to engage and convince readers.

Synopsis

The story begins with the main character, Raja, who dreams of becoming a qualified teacher and volunteering for the community. He continues his studies at a teacher training college in Kuala Lumpur. As the eldest child raised by his grandmother in a modest family, Raja feels neglected and longs for his mother's affection. His close friendship with Kumarasamy plays a key role as Kumarasamy helps resolve family issues, especially in caring for Raja's mother while Raja is away at college. The novel also details Raja's efforts in teaching poor students by checking SPM essays and offering free Bahasa Malaysia classes during school holidays. His strong passion for teaching also inspires his peers at college to volunteer, emphasizing the camaraderie among trainee teachers. Another character, Julie, becomes Raja's love interest, offering him support and encouragement throughout their community work. In the end, despite the loss of his mother, Raja remains unwavering in his commitment to serve the community, masking his grief to fulfill his duties. Through this, the author effectively conveys social messages to readers. Therefore, the researcher elaborates on the definition of a novel, Tamil literature, and the synopsis of this Tamil novel for further study.

Problem Statement

Tamil novels include a wide variety of important literary elements that nurture spirituality and commendable behavior. Each novel presents characters that deal with personal issues and offer rational solutions, serving as guidance for readers facing similar challenges in life. Authors raise various social values to help younger generations appreciate literature. In the context of globalization and rapid social change, the Tamil community in Malaysia faces challenges affecting its social values. Although the community has retained many traditional aspects, there is a lack of in-depth studies on how these values have evolved or adapted under modern pressures.

This study aims to investigate the changes in social values among the Tamil community, factors influencing these changes, and how younger generations adapt to them in their life. There is insufficient understanding of how relevant traditional values remain and whether they are preserved or altered in today's global and multicultural society. Generally, social values must be deeply embedded through literature. The primary reason for selecting this novel is that it highlights various elements that contribute to individual, family, and societal development. Education, economy, culture, and social aspects are essential in forming a prosperous and harmonious society, particularly for the Indian community.

Education is key to improving one's quality of life and fostering creative and innovative thinking. As education constantly evolves with time, it aligns with the goals of Malaysia's Ministry of Education (MoE), which aims to produce high-quality human capital balanced in learning and personal development (Safiek, 2019). Accordingly, the novel emphasizes education through Raja's role in guiding underprivileged students and transforming their future. This focus helps build moral character and nurture ethical individuals.

Economics is another major factor influencing one's entire life. Economic wealth shapes activities within a community. The novel portrays the struggles of the Indian community in achieving economic progress. Their burdened and stressful lives emphasize the need for economic growth. Analyzing this narrative can raise awareness among readers and inspire efforts to improve living standards. Cultural aspects also contribute to social values. According to Khader Ahmad and Ibrahim Adham Mohd (2021), cultural practices are integral to all communities. However, misguided cultural beliefs can harm societal well-being. The author emphasizes the importance of cultural values, providing exemplary stories to inspire all social groups. Strong cultural practice fosters democratic, understanding, and humane societies. The novel also highlights the importance of social responsibility. It reflects how individuals should care for community welfare. Social responsibility must be instilled from a young age to promote harmony and mutual understanding among community members.

Moral aspects must be practiced to cultivate visionary individuals with life goals. This study also helps readers explore moral elements in the novel, which reflect real-life issues and societal thoughts. It encourages the younger generation to appreciate literature and learn valuable lessons from it. Thus, the researcher believes this study contributes to education, economy, culture, and social well-being-elements that must be instilled in today's society. The study mirrors real-life challenges and the community's ability to embrace social values at every life stage. Therefore, this novel deserves to be analyzed to shape a well-mannered and moral society. Hence, the research gaps were identified and is addressed in this article.

While traditional Tamil novels are acknowledged for promoting social values, there is a significant gap in understanding how these values have evolved or transformed in response to modern societal pressures, especially within the Malaysian context. The influence of globalization and multicultural interactions on the Tamil community's value system remains underexplored. Although literature is said to instill values, limited

research investigates how effectively Tamil novels like '*Anbin Aarathanai*' help younger generations internalize and apply these values in real-life scenarios. The connection between literary exposure and youth's behavioral adaptation remains insufficiently examined.

Education is cited as a major theme in the novel, yet there is a lack of scholarly work evaluating how Tamil literary works portray education as a transformative force—especially in the context of shaping character, ethical reasoning, and future aspirations among Indian youth in Malaysia. The economic struggles of the Indian community are depicted in the novel, but research is lacking on how these representations influence readers' understanding of economic empowerment, motivation, and the role of literature in addressing socioeconomic issues.

While cultural practices and moral values are mentioned as vital themes, there is a research gap in critically analyzing how Tamil novels navigate the tension between traditional beliefs and contemporary moral dilemmas. Studies rarely investigate how literature mediates between preserving heritage and fostering progressive thinking. The value of social responsibility is emphasized, yet academic discussions rarely focus on how effectively Tamil novels instill a sense of civic duty, communal harmony, and proactive citizenship among readers, particularly the younger generation.

Most existing studies appear to be literary in nature without integrating sociological, educational, or psychological perspectives. There is a gap in multidisciplinary research that connects literary content with measurable social outcomes in education, economy, culture, and social behavior. While the courage of women pursuing education is acknowledged in the novel, there is insufficient exploration of gender-based social values and how Tamil literature challenges or reinforces gender roles and equality in the community. These gaps highlight the need for a more comprehensive, context-specific, and interdisciplinary investigation into how Tamil novels, especially '*Anbin Aarathanai*', serve as cultural tools for value transmission, personal development, and community transformation in contemporary Malaysian society.

Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To identify the social values presented in the Tamil novel '*Anbin Aarathanai*' and analyze their role in societal well-being.
- ii. To determine how the social values in the Tamil novel '*Anbin Aarathanai*' can be applied towards societal well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development of Social Values

Along with the rapid advancement of technology and information today, society is moving forward and placing more focus on materialistic life over the development of human character and personality. This situation has led to negative influences within communities. As a result, various social problems arise, which bring harm to individuals, families, and the surrounding society. For example, a bullying case reported in the news (Bernama, Dec 21, 2021) raised questions about the lack of empathy and humanity among teenagers who collectively assaulted a peer. According to education and psychology experts in that case, the incident occurred due to the lack of noble values in character development. This illustrates the importance of instilling moral values in character formation, especially among students, to prevent them from engaging in social problems.

In addition, the development of social values is essential for all levels of human society. Social development is a continuous process in human life. Humans are naturally social beings; thus, they cannot exist in isolation. Frequent interaction with others can reduce anxiety, depression, and stress, while increasing self-confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, social values influence the personality of an individual as a member of society. It is clearly shown that individuals who exhibit competent behavior grounded in social values can be respected and admired by the community.

Social values are also instilled in various aspects, especially in literary works. This is because literary materials are a medium through which authors can easily convey messages to readers. Literary works such as novels, poems, and short stories are platforms for embedding social values such as love, education, trustworthiness, honesty, sincerity, and more. The values contained within literary works are aspects that should be used as behavioral models in daily life. According to Sari and Septiyana (2018), moral value is a logical concept referring to principles, actions, or human traits that are deemed right or wrong, and good or bad. This

shows that social values serve as a guiding principle for individuals in their daily lives. Hence, the practice of social values is important as it reflects a person's behavior.

Therefore, the development of values should be emphasized in forming a civilized society. Social values serve as the ultimate guide for individuals in fulfilling social roles. These social values also motivate individuals to realize their aspirations in line with their roles. As such, writers have a great responsibility in raising awareness about the importance of social values through their creative works.

The Role of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE) in Literature Teaching

The incorporation of literary elements in teaching and learning at school level should be implemented to fully realize students' potential and cultivate their interest in literary works. In promoting literature teaching, the government plays a key role in educating the younger generation to engage with literary works in classroom learning (Zuhaimi & Abdullah, 2023). In line with this, the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) outlines six student aspirations: knowledge, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethics and spirituality, national identity, and thinking skills. These aspirations must be acquired by every student. These six aspirations are aligned with Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), aimed at developing well-rounded and harmonious individuals who are knowledgeable and competent. Thus, through literature teaching, MOE's vision can be achieved by nurturing individuals who are creative, critical, and innovative thinkers.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) must intensify efforts to support teachers in teaching literary materials to students. The MOE should develop strategies to implement literature teaching beginning at the primary school level. According to Muhamad Aniq and Mohd Syuhaidi (2019), in order to cultivate interest and motivation in reading literary works, literature must be integrated into the education system. Therefore, teachers should diversify their teaching methods to create an enjoyable learning environment when introducing literature to students. The MoE must also encourage educators to apply literary knowledge that meets students' needs.

A study by Chew Fong Peng (2022) found that teaching and learning strategies for the KOMSAS (Component of Literature in Malay Language Subject) program emphasize language proficiency and content integration so that students can effectively communicate their thoughts and emotions about knowledge, personal matters, and societal issues. Therefore, teachers must take the initiative to make literature learning more engaging and enjoyable in the classroom, in order to spark students' interest in appreciating literary works. It is evident that literature teaching is crucial for training students to think creatively and critically.

Methodology

In this study, the research design is based on a qualitative method that focuses more specifically on textual analysis and interpretation using the Hermeneutic method. The Hermeneutic method is employed as an attempt to find meaning in written words. This qualitative method emphasizes sociocultural and historical influences in uncovering or revealing implicit meanings within texts or works. It aids researchers in interpreting human behavior to gain a deeper understanding of interpersonal interactions.

In Hermeneutic textual analysis, for instance, written compositions are regarded as oral or written subjects used to elaborate on a particular interpreted meaning. The text produced by the author is seen as capable of presenting text interpretation in the context of time progression and historical accumulation. Despite various views and interpretations of Hermeneutics, all converge on the interpretation of the studied text. Understanding the text through Hermeneutic interpretation is an effort to clarify ambiguities present within the text. Furthermore, data collection in this study is based on a qualitative approach. This method helps gather information using interview protocols and document analysis involving respondents, namely primary school teachers. The interview instrument was used to collect data from two respondents who are Tamil language teachers at primary schools.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the social values contained in the Tamil novel '*Anbin Aarathanai*'. Therefore, the interview instrument is used on the sample to collect data. The original text was obtained from respondents through the research instrument, i.e., interviews. The original text was interpreted using the Hermeneutic method to answer the research questions. The result of interpreting the original text is known as a metatext. According to Hermeneutic method, metatext is the interpretive output of the text,

containing explanations of what is being sought in the text. This method is used to examine and interpret the social values highlighted in the novel by answering the research questions.

Sampling

In this study, Tamil language teachers from two Tamil National-Type Schools (SJKT) were involved. The researcher selected two teachers from two different schools using a purposive sampling method. To gather information from the sample, the researcher prepared interview questions including items such as education level and teaching experience.

Research Instruments

In this study, interviews with semi-structured questions and document analysis, i.e. the novel was used to collect data from samples. This method lets samples elaborate freely on their thoughts and ideas during the interview process. The researcher interviewed two Tamil language teachers, each with five years of teaching experience. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. All respondents cooperated fully, and their answers were recorded and transcribed as evidence. In this study, the researcher analyzed the Tamil novel '*Anbin Aarathanai*' as part of the document analysis. Information derived from this analysis was cross-referenced with interview data to identify consistency and alignment with the research issue. Document analysis of the novel aimed to verify and support the data obtained from interviews. This process enhanced the researcher's understanding of the studied phenomenon and helped in drawing conclusions for new research insights.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher also used the Hermeneutic method, a text analysis approach, by transcribing interviews to uncover social values in this novel. This method enabled the researcher to interpret the novel as text. From the Hermeneutic perspective, texts contain both explicit and implicit meanings that require interpretation. A researcher must remain open-minded and free from prejudice, bias, or assumptions. According to Loganathan (1992), researchers may encounter ambiguity or *ontoenigma* when interpreting text content. Interview transcripts containing such ambiguity must be resolved to understand the underlying meanings. When analyzing a text, the researcher may identify both external and internal structures. The combination of both structures helps the researcher overcome ambiguity during the *ontopretation* process to better understand the text. A comprehensive examination of subconscious elements referenced in the text allows the researcher to achieve significant understanding.

Research Findings

RQ 1: What are the social values highlighted from the Tamil novel '*Anbin Aarathanai*'?

In this study, two respondents who had read the Tamil novel '*Anbin Aarathanai*' participated in an interview conducted by the researcher. Both respondents had five years of experience of teaching Tamil and possessed extensive knowledge of Tamil literature. Table 1 illustrates the interpretation of the Interview with the Tamil Language Teachers (Respondent 1 & 2).

Table 1: Interpretation of the Interview with Respondent 1

Respondent	Excerpt	Transcription / Interpretation
R1	"Raja... attracts attention due to his Raja embodies leadership and capability. His character talents...guides students and teachers in inspires readers through his responsible and influential community projects."	role as a teacher and community leader.
R1	"Santhi writes letters to Raja... Raja The story highlights deep familial affection, especially shows unconditional love for his among non-biological siblings, promoting the value of siblings."	unconditional love.

R1	"Raja is committed... educates students without any fees... mentors trainee teachers."	Raja's dedication to education is profound. He not only teaches without expecting rewards but also nurtures future educators and supports children with special needs.
R1	"Guides in Bahasa Malaysia for SPM... shapes character through programs."	Raja shows a strong teacher identity, marked by emotional involvement and responsibility in academic and character development.
R1	"Organizes sewing and skill-building... keeps teenagers from harmful paths."	Raja is active in youth character-building, using community projects to provide positive outlets and skill development.
R1	"Collaboration with trainee teachers like Ramasamy, Julie..."	Teamwork is a core value, with Raja fostering a culture of collaboration and shared purpose among his peers.
R1	"Encourages reading... participates in poetry competitions."	Promoting a reading culture is central to Raja's character, as he models and encourages literary engagement.
R1	"Kumarasamy helps during family hardship..."	Supportive friendships are portrayed as critical during personal crises, reinforcing values of loyalty and empathy.
R1	"Raja encourages Kanmani... Julie and Santhi strive for education."	The courage of women pursuing education is highlighted, with Raja supporting female empowerment through education.
R1	"Faith in horoscopes, marriage rituals..."	Cultural identity and spirituality are emphasized through Raja's adherence to Hindu traditions, which shape his ethical outlook.
	Respondent Excerpt	Transcription / Interpretation
R2	"Raja... shoulders family responsibilities and leads community projects with the support of friends."	Raja demonstrates courage and leadership by managing family duties and taking initiative in community work, portraying a strong sense of self-identity.
R2	"Kumarasamy assists Raja's sick mother... maintains communication."	Compassion is emphasized through Kumarasamy's caring actions, symbolizing empathy and concern for others across social boundaries.
R2	"Raja sacrifices time, energy... leads projects without compensation."	Raja upholds responsibility and serves as a role model by committing selflessly to teaching and community service.
R2	"Raja's love for Tamil... participation in language competitions."	His passion for the Tamil language highlights cultural pride and the desire to uplift his community through literary engagement.
R2	"Helps junior trainees... offers academic and personal guidance."	Strong bonds between juniors and seniors reflect mentorship, collaboration, and the nurturing of educational growth.
R2	"Raja's caring demeanor toward Julie..."	The narrative showcases positive male affection, with Raja's love for Julie depicted as sincere and emotionally supportive.
R2	"Mentors students in Bahasa Malaysia... contributes to education."	Education is portrayed as a top priority, with Raja actively empowering others and viewing knowledge as a path to progress.
R2	"Practices Hindu traditions... values passed through generations."	Raja's commitment to Hindu traditions reflects cultural continuity and the shaping of his moral and spiritual character.

Discussion on RQ 1:

The Tamil novel ‘*Anbin Aarathanai*’ encapsulates a wide range of profound social values that reflect both personal integrity and collective cultural consciousness. Central to the narrative are themes of leadership and individual capability, demonstrated through characters who take initiative and inspire others within educational and community settings. The protagonist’s deep affection for siblings underscores the importance of familial bonds and emotional responsibility.

A significant emphasis is placed on dedication to students’ education and the embodiment of a strong teacher identity, portraying educators not merely as instructors, but as moral guides and catalysts for change. This aligns with the novel’s broader mission of raising awareness among youth and fostering teamwork among trainee teachers, which collectively highlight the transformative power of collaboration and mentorship in shaping future generations.

The novel also champions the promotion of a reading culture, reinforcing the value of intellectual engagement and lifelong learning. Supportive friendships, especially during times of family hardship, reveal the human capacity for empathy, solidarity, and resilience. Women’s courage in pursuing education is another pivotal theme, portraying female characters as assertive and ambitious within traditional societal constraints, thereby challenging gender norms.

Cultural and spiritual dimensions are woven throughout the narrative, with a pronounced faith in Hindu traditions and customs, reflecting the integral role of religion and spirituality in personal identity and community values.

Further values identified in the novel include courage, compassion, and a strong sense of responsibility as both a teacher and role model. The characters exhibit a profound love for the Tamil language, asserting cultural pride and linguistic heritage. The novel highlights respectful and supportive relationships between juniors and seniors, and explores male affection and love toward women in a respectful and emotionally mature manner. Finally, the consistent prioritization of education serves as a unifying principle, reinforcing its role as the cornerstone of individual growth and societal progress. This comprehensive portrayal of values in *Anbin Aarathanai* positions the novel not only as a literary work but also as a vehicle for ethical reflection, educational advocacy, and cultural affirmation.

RQ 2: How the social values highlighted in the Tamil novel ‘*Anbin Aarathanai*’ be applied towards societal well-being?

Data from Interviews and interpretation with Tamil Language Subject Teachers at Primary Schools Study Text (Interview Results from Respondent 1 & 2) as in Table 2.

Table 2

Data from Interviews and interpretation with Tamil Language Subject Teachers at Primary Schools Study Text

Interview Text from Respondent 1	Interpretation of text from Respondent 1
<i>In my opinion, it cannot be denied that the social values highlighted in the novel ‘Anbin Aarathanai’ greatly influence the well-being of society. From my perspective, the social values analyzed through this novel are directed towards societal well-being in the aspect of education. A highly educated society can</i>	R1 stated that the Tamil novel emphasizes education as a social value that should be emulated and considered to enhance societal well-being. Education is a key pillar in national development. A country’s progress cannot be achieved without an educated population. This directly shows the relationship between

develop a nation that competes at the international level. Therefore, the focus on education in the reading of this novel significantly contributes to society. This novel also clearly incorporates social and communal aspects. In this Tamil novel, we can see that all characters display polite and friendly behavior. All characters exhibit behavior that reflects social interaction among each other. This, indirectly, strengthens community ties and nurtures communal well-being.

education and national development. In this novel, the author clearly portrays the main character, Raja, as someone who focuses on education to nurture a highly intellectual community. Raja is also portrayed as forward-thinking, as educated individuals can contribute to national development. The novel also promotes social values that support balanced societal growth. The development of individuals occurs physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, and socially. Thus, socialization helps shape personal identity. The novel explores attitudes and social values that maintain tradition and societal development.

Interview Text from Respondent 2

From my reading of this Tamil novel, the author lists various aspects of social values. These analyzed social values have a significant impact on influencing societal well-being. In my view, the author emphasizes the importance of the economic aspect among the Indian community. This is because a stable economy contributes to the overall well-being of a nation. The novel explains the importance of understanding and being aware of economic development knowledge for the future of the next generation. In addition, both the main and supporting characters in the novel consistently portray social aspects aimed at societal well-being. This good behavior and thinking are clearly demonstrated through the character of Raja, who shows exemplary behavior that should be followed by the local community. His concern for the community's situation motivates him to strive to improve the standard of living of the Indian community.

Interpretation of text from Respondent 2

R2 also believes that social values affect national development. Economic factors influence Malaysia's international growth. This is because only an educated population can contribute to the country's economic growth. In the novel, the main character Raja constantly emphasizes the importance of economics in national development. Economic growth is dependent on the country's poverty rate. Therefore, a country must take initiatives to improve its economy through various economic plans. R2 also emphasized that positive behavior and thinking significantly impact character development. Through this novel, both the main and supporting characters present social values that individuals should possess. Thus, character development becomes easier.

Discussion on RQ 2:

According to the interview findings from Respondent 1 (R1) and Respondent 2 (R2), an analysis has been made on how the social values highlighted in the Tamil novel 'Anbin Aarathanai' can be applied towards societal well-being. Both respondents mentioned various aspects that contribute to societal well-being. Among the main points raised during the interviews were education, social interaction, and economics. Societal well-being influences peace and stability within a community.

Hence, by improving the educational, social, and economic aspects of a society, it can support comprehensive societal development. The stability of a country depends on the collective well-being of its people. Thus, a caring community can have a major impact on national progress on the international stage.

Conclusion

This study shows that the analysis of social values in the Tamil novel helps readers draw lessons from its conflicts and experiences. It benefits society at large. It is recommended that teachers explore literary works and strive to produce their own writings. This can foster creative, critical-thinking educators and inspire writers. The novel discussed portrays a capable teacher, making it a good example for educators. The study helps teachers deepen their professional spirit and create high-quality literary works.

This research also contributes to shaping good character and behavior in society. The novel serves as valuable material for educating students cognitively, physically, and spiritually. Thus, it plays a role in character development and provides useful input for readers. Additionally, the study makes a significant contribution to the field of literature. A writer's creative and socially aware ideas are best conveyed through literary works. Authors have a responsibility to impart moral and social values that develop personality, psychology, and spirituality. Their work becomes a cultural treasure that shapes future generations. Thus, authors bear a great responsibility to produce high-quality literature that contributes to national literary heritage.

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