

DALIT VOICE

[The Voice Of The Persecuted Minorities]

Adviser : Dr. Mulk Raj Anand

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DALIT MOVEMENT IS FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Jagjivan Ram, India's most famous Untouchable leader after the death of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, has still some hopes of becoming the Prime Minister. Therefore, he is waiting with bated breath even at this ripe age of past 70.

This is what he says in *Sunday* (Oct. 16) in which Ram presents a pathetic picture of a person who is as good as dead—though living. Ram, a *Harijan* from Bihar was discovered by M. K. Gandhi and the Congress Party and groomed to fight Dr. Ambedkar, the greatest Indian after the Buddha. And as a stooge of the Hindus, Ram played his role very well and for these services he was amply rewarded. Ever since India became "independent" he was a Minister in the Govt. of India rising up to Dy. Prime Minister during the short-lived Janata rule. Even now he is a Parliament Member living in New Delhi's sprawling Krishna Menon Road bungalow.

The Hindus, who may be generous enough to throw bones and skin to their watch-dogs waiting outside their feasting

houses, for the first time snubbed him when he aspired for the country's highest post of Prime Minister—reserved for the "holy Brahmin". When the Janata Party fielded him for the Prime Ministership, even the RSS, the Janata storm-troopers, worked for Indira Gandhi and prevented the "holy land" being polluted by an Untouchable occupying the highest seat.

From then on Ram is in oblivion. No doubt very angry. For quite some time fretting and fuming. His election speeches openly attacked Brahmins. He even went to the extent of saying that Brahmins need not vote for him. Not only Brahmins did not vote for him, they managed to reject the Janata Party itself and brought back Mrs. Gandhi. That was the one and the only occasion that Ram revolted in his life against Brahmins who decided once for all that Ram could no longer be

trusted. That was the end of his lack-lustre career.

No intellectually dishonest person will have the courage to fight the Ruling Class. Because Ambedkar had that rare intellectual calibre coupled with a sterling character, he got that courage. And courage comes out of conviction. And millions of Dalits and others are today enjoying the fruits of his labour. But the Ruling Class had long back discovered that Ram could be corrupted. It keeps a watch on every person who tries to dislodge it and uses four different deadly weapons, one after the other, to finish such rebels. The four weapons are *saama* (mediation), *dana* (bribery), *bedha* (character assassination or creating dissensions) and finally *danda* (punishment). Every person who challenges the Ruling Class has to face one or other of the four. Ambedkar did not yield to any of the first three and that is why he succeeded in rattling the Ruling Class. None after the Buddha had shaken the corrupt Hindu society as he did. Even after decades of his death (1956) Ambedkar is giving nightmares to many in the Ruling Class. And had he been allowed to live for some more years after his historic conversion to Buddhism, he would have succeeded in launching a Cultural Revolution which in turn would have paved the way for the destruction of the castes, meaning "classes" in Marxian terms. But, alas, the heartless Ruling Class killed him by using the last of its weapons— *danda*. Dalits suspect that Ambedkar did not die a natural death.

Ambedkar might have succumbed only to the last of the four weapons after the other three were tried one after the other. But many Dalits feel that Ram

yielded to the very first. And thus, to quote Charan Singh, became India's richest politician. But what is the use of his vast wealth? And his 35 years of Ministership? His name will not go into history. Ambedkar was a Minister only for a couple of years. He had no wealth comparable to that of Ram. He was not even in the ruling party like Ram. But difference is Ram is living but Ambedkar is dead but alive in the hearts and homes of millions. He is the rising star of India. Ram is alive, living in a royal style. But who remembers him? It is death while living. A shameless state. Ambedkar is the hope of millions of revolutionaries. Ram is already down and out. Thrown to the dust bin of history. His star never rose.

Ambedkar was a Dalit. Ram a *Harijan* (hated word, meaning children of god, coined by Gandhi to deceive the Dalits) stooging the Hindus. But Ram is not alone in this business of stooging. There are many other *Harijan* leaders working as the bonded labourers of different political parties, all led by high caste Hindus. These Hindu-controlled parties including the communist parties, keep an eternal vigil on every promising Dalit and promptly recruit them and make them *Harijans*, meaning willing servants of the Hindus. After Ram was kicked out of the Congress Party, several other *Harijans* were elevated by Mrs. Gandhi but they did not last even two years. Ram alone could last for over 30 years because he is a brilliant guy. While we may criticise him for his intellectual corruption, which is the worst among the different varieties of corruption, we have to give him credit to his amazing abilities as an administrator,

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BRAHMINS PRACTISED CASTE, ATE BEEF : DRINKING, AND GAMBLING IN VEDIC PERIOD

(our correspondent)

Bangalore : Whenever we say that caste is killing the Hindu society, those advocates of "Go back to Vedic age", hit back saying that caste has no sanction under the Vedas and it was all milk and honey during the Vedic period. We are not interested if caste was there during the Vedic period or not in such a remote past (about 15th century BC) but what it is today. The answer to the question that caste is killing us is not that caste was not there during the Vedas. We are concerned with what it is today and not what it was when the society was primitive.

All the more it is necessary that we should know the facts though our Veda worshippers are never known for facts. We can't get a better authority on the Vedas than Sir Monier Williams, who studied Sanskrit for 50 years and occupied the world's most prestigious Boden Chair at the Oxford where many top Brahmin "scholars" studied Sanskrit under him. A great admirer of Hinduism, he toured India several times and Brahmin Sanskrit "scholars" had admitted Sir Williams' mastery of the subject. Author of many books including the celebrated, *Indian Wisdom*, his magnum opus, *Religious Thought & Life in India*, first published in 1813, came out as an Indian edition (1974) as it became the most authoritative work even for Brahmins (write to Oriental Books Reprint Corp., No. 54- Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi-110 055, pages 520, price Rs. 100) This is the best book on Vedism, Brahminism and Hinduism and, therefore, every Dalit and persecuted minority must possess a copy.

About the Rig Veda, he says "it is the first Bible of the Hindu religion." Such

is the respect commanded by this 'Sacred' text even to this day. It is in this Veda the caste is mentioned in the "celebrated Purusha hymn (*Rig Veda, Mandala X. 90*, translated by me in the *Indian Wisdom*, p. 24..... It also foreshadows the idea of sacrifice, as well as the institution of caste, which for so many centuries has held India in bondage". (page 17)

The embodied spirit has a thousand heads,

A thousand eyes, a thousand feet, around

On every side enveloping the earth,

Yet filling space no larger than a span

He is himself this very universe ;

He is whatever is, has been, and shall be;

He is the lord of immortality.

All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths

Are that which is immortal in the sky.

From him, called Purusha, was born Viraj,

And from Viraj was Purusha produced, Whom gods and holy men made their oblation.

With Purusha as victim, they performed A sacrifice. When they divided him, How did they cut him up? What was his mouth?

What were his arms? And what his thighs and feet?

The Brahman was his mouth, the kingly soldier

Was made his arms, the husbandman his thighs,

The servile Sudra issued from his feet.

The author says that during the Vedic period "polygamy, existed, though monogamy was the rule, they killed animals for sacrifice; they were in the habit of eating animal food, and did not even object the flesh of cows, they were fond of gambling, and indulged in intoxicating beverages." (pg. 18) Even "human sacrifice was once part of the Brahmanical system" (pg. 24)

Referring to the same subject Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (*Who Were the Shudras?* Thackers, Rampart Row, Bombay, 1970) says: "The constitution of the society prescribed by the *Purusa Shukta* is known as *chaturvarnya*... *Purusha Sukta* has never been questioned by any one except the Buddha.... "Not only our Hindu salesmen do not condemn the *Purusha Sukta* but often propogate the idea that the solution to all the ills of India lies in our going back to the Vedas. That means our Shankracharyas must give up vegetarianism and start eating cow and drinking liquor. In that case what will hapen, to their worship of mother cow? What will happen to Gandhi's Prohibition? And the Ahimsa (non-violence)? The Tallow controversy?"

There are so many contradictions in what our Hindu leaders talk that sometimes they secretly feel ashamed of the go-back-to-Veda call. But this is done privately. For public they have a different face.

Those who want to know more of the absurdities, the contradictions, the stupidities of Hinduism may read Arun Shourie's famous book, *Hinduism: Essence & Consequences—A Study of the Upanishads, the Brahma-Sutras & the Gita*, [Vikas 20/4, Industrial Area, Sahibabad, Dt. Gaziabad, UP, India. Pages 410 - Price Rs. 125-1979].

HALFWAY TO EQUALITY

(A book on the plight of educated Dalits)

Author : Partap C. Aggarwal

The book is about educated, aspiring Dalits who have made good in different fields. Thirty people—students, government officials, university professors, journalists, engineers, doctors and other professionals, and political leaders speak for and about themselves. They talk of their family background, their education, jobs, social life, their fears and dilemmas, and their hopes for the future. Their autobiographical accounts reveal with searing simplicity what it is to be born an Untouchable and how they have battled & are still battling with their environment and their own inhibitions for a better life.

Many Dalits try to hide their caste identity or 'pass'. But they hardly succeed. Despite popular misconception they are quite 'visible', not in a crowd, but always to colleagues, neighbours, customers and clients.

Clearly the stigma attached to their caste persists; colleagues often hesitate to share food with them; landlords in high caste localities refuse to rent house, teachers show contempt towards them, insulting expressions are used with or without the conscious intent to hurt them.

Education, good jobs and privileges of the Dalits have helped but have by no means removed prejudices and stereotypes of the high castes. It is for the reader, however, to judge whether they are more or less than Halfway to Equality.

An intensely human document that will stir all readers, and that every educated Indian ought to read and think about.

Partap C. Aggarwal, Ph.D. in Anthropology from Cornell University (1966) taught at Colgate University. In 1971, he joined the Shri Ram Centre in Delhi and devoted his time to research and writing for about 8 years. He is now associated with the Friends Rural Centre in Central India. He has published three other books and a large number of articles.

Sept. 1983 pages : 279. Rs. 125

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GANDHI - THE AGENT OF INDIA'S RULING CLASS

(J. D. Elangovan, Bangalore)

On behalf of the Dalits and other persecuted minorities of India, I congratulate Tariq Ali, a Leftist intellectual who is fighting the Establishment in Pakistan, for exposing the humbug in 'Mahatma' Gandhi, in his article in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. (Oct. 2-1983)

Much is being written about the Mahatma that neither he himself could be believed nor what is written about him is slowly entering the area of disbelief.

But Tariq Ali's essay is most appropriate. He comes straight to the point — the legacy of Gandhi. The legacy is what one leaves to posterity. Gandhi has left his teachings, actions and its consequences to the Indian 'bourgeoisie' or the Congress Party and its variants, Congress (s) Congress (J) and Janata Party.

The legacy is similar to a blank cheque and it is encashed leaf after leaf as time and circumstances demand. Tariq Ali is concerned at this curious turn of events. How a mass urge and thirst for economic freedom and independence later, grabbed by the rich in India and ruled over with scant regard to the poor. He is singularly clear and precise as to how Gandhi himself knitted and tailored the movement to suit the Indian bourgeoisie and British monarchy.

"Gandhism was not a freak of history. It was not a specific ideology devised for specific aims in a specific period. Gandhi wanted the British out of India. The British ruling class knew that they could not rule India in permanence. Gandhi's political strategy — a reformist social pacifism

— coincided with the long-term designs of the Raj. One crucial consideration united Gandhi and the British. Both wanted to preserve the social and economic status quo after the British withdrawal. The transition from a colony to an Independent State was aptly symbolised by the appointment of Mountbatten as the First Head of State of free India. This particular variant of the trust with destiny owed more to Gandhi than any other political leader. It was also history's unique tribute to the skills of the British and Indian ruling class. This is not an abstract or dogmatic assertion. The late GD Birla was not merely one of the foremost representatives of Indian Capitalism, he saw his role as that of a broker between Indian nationalism and British Imperialism. Gandhi, a close friend and leader, was his prized instrument in this regard".

At the time of his support to Mahatma, Birla's assets were about Rs. 300 millions and today it is more than as 10,000 millions, beating the Tatas on the way.

Tariq Ali adds Gandhi was a Hindu leader. He refused to acknowledge the deep class divisions that existed within the Indian society. He deliberately shut his eyes to the oppression and exploitation inflicted on the mass of Indians by other Indians. As a consequence he refused to take sides in the indigenous class struggle. Exploiters and exploited are equals in the Gandhian lexicon. What this means in reality is preserving the existing social order.

In the case of Moplah peasant rebellion

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WHY A MUSLIM - DALIT ALLIANCE ?

(M. A. Delvi, Bangalore)

There is a growing interest among the educated and others over this Alliance, its aims and objectives. Before this let us take stock of the situation in India. Is there a possibility of change however remote in a society like ours? The chances are so remote that a great German philosopher, Scheler, says: "that the spirit of rebellion finds few means of expression in societies where inequalities are very great like the Hindu caste system".

The politics whether at the panchayat or at the national level is based on the combinations of castes. Election results reveal that the results are caste-oriented and nothing else. Since no caste on its own is in a position to dictate terms it is bound to come to terms with other castes to give semblance of a democratic setup. The "independence" has only added another dimension to the setup. It has added economic dimension to the existing caste structure there by sharpening the caste-class contours. In this setup naturally the losers will be and are such groups who are numerically and economically at the receiving end. It becomes imperative, nay indispensable, for such groups to co-ordinate, reorient and reshape their thoughts and actions to be in a bargaining position within the dominant group in a pseudo-democratic setup like ours.

It is also apparent by now that the dominant caste-class setup is not inclined to concede in favour of any other sections of India any benefits accruing them as equal citizens of India. The usurpation of both political and economic power is total and complete. They are as well ready to utilise all powers at their disposal including that of the State to block the way to an honourable position

in the polity of India. Precisely for this reason they are subjected to all sorts of harassment and blackmail. Their pitiable state may be imagined when at a time they were subjected to slaughter in Assam and other places their representatives at the national level were snubbed and could not obtain an interview to represent to the Govt. When they asked for a medical college hell is let loose upon them. How can their aspiring boys come up when the educational results too are caste-oriented!

With this background it becomes the duty of the oppressed and persecuted sections of the society to take stock of the situation before every thing is lost for ever. The dominant classes have fortified their position to the extent that they are not ready to concede even marginal benefits to more than 50% of the population. This is the result of continued alienation of these weaker sections and lack of rapport among them. One of the reasons for this is the direct result of the methodology of the Ruling Class.

The two bigger groups of have-nots are the Dalits, who constitute about 30% of the population, and Muslims about 15%, and other minorities, and the biggest chunk the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Although great revolutionaries like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, in the socio-political realm, and Periyar in metaphysical realm have brought about a perceptible awakening,

with their disappearance from the scene their movements have been bogged down. Some of the social thinkers such as the late Shyam Sunder and others came to the conclusion that by bringing about a closer understanding among the have-nots, and to start with Dalits and Muslims, may give a new direction in bringing about a socio-economic change in this country and also it may lead to a position of bargaining which may result in the establishment of an equitable society. It may also be a first step towards social, cultural, educational and economic integration.

Such an Alliance, which we are visualising, is not directed against any section of the society but will be a force for establishing a society bereft of exploitation.

A 35-page booklet on the need for such an Alliance of the persecuted is under preparation. Those interested may write to the Convener: No. 8, upstairs, Williams Town, Bangalore-560 005.

[Contd. from page 5]

during the early twenties, Gandhi's hostility to the peasantry manifested itself in an ugly form. He insisted on viewing the struggle through communal spectacles simply because the bulk of the peasants were Muslims and virtually every rich landlord was an upper caste Hindu. Gandhi attacked the peasants for communalism. Not surprisingly, the British troops and civil servants who went to crush the rebellion took up the same theme, thus effectively isolating the movement from the rest of India.

Tariq Ali touches caste system and communalism. Gandhi abhorred the treatment of Untouchables and carried out many personal acts to publicly demonstrate his revulsion for the grotesque character of casteism in India.

On the whole, Tariq Ali's analysis is well-done. The legend has turned sour and India must look towards the future.

Deprived Castes & Their Struggle for Equality

by Dr. N. D. Kamble

Noted Dalit Scholar, Head of the Dept., Social Service Management, Inst. for Social and Ec. Change, Bangalore

Rs. 200- pages 364, 1983

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DALIT VOICE IN U.N.O

The Tamil version of the testimony submitted by Dr. L.N. Berwa, president, Vision, at the UNO can be had from :

Dalit Sahitya Akademy,
32, IV Street, Venkateshapuram
New Colony, Madras - 600 012.

pages 24- price: Re. 1. (Postage extra)

T. N. GOVT. VIOLATES FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

(R. Elumalai, Madras)

The Tamil Nadu Govt. Order seeking dismissal of Dalit employees on conversion to other religions (DV Nov. 1) violates our fundamental Rights.

Here is a fit case for the Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes, headed by Justice Bhagawati of the Supreme Court. How could a Govt. be used to protect a religion? TN order amounts to a very serious violation of the Constitution and we call upon Dalits and their well-wishers to challenge this order by filing writs before the Bagawati Committee, Address: No.3, Janpath, New Delhi-110003.

Meanwhile, a local Christian organisation has filed a writ through the Bagawati Committee challenging the constitutional discrimination against non-Hindu Dalits. Experts are of the opinion that the Constitution is being used to protect Hinduism. Withdrawing reservations the moment a Dalit embraces a religion other than Hinduism means a threat to Dalits not to quit Hinduism. How can the Constitution of India be pro-Hindu? This issue and many other matters of interest to Dalits may be referred to P. D. Mathew, Legal Aid Cell, Indian Social Institute, Lodi Rd., New Delhi-110 003.

TRIBALS ON WAR-PATH

Calcutta; There are signs of fresh restiveness among the tribals of Bihar and West Bengal. Krantikari Chhatra Yuba Morcha, an organisation of tribal students & youth, organised a conference at Chai-basa, Singhbhum, in Bihar where issues like the culture of Jharkhand, local

problems and rural economy were discussed.

Tribals of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh have been demanding a separate Jharkhand State to preserve the "tribal identity and ways of life".

The State Government's ban on foreign missionaries — in the name of preventing the flow of foreign money into the country — deprived the tribals of the chance to get better education & learn methods of self-employment. There was hardly any development in the tribal-inhabited villages of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore districts. (*Hindu*, Oct. 13)

MASSACRE OF MUSLIMS

Azeez Sait, the Karnataka minister for labour and waqfs, has alleged that the Assam massacre of Muslims was well planned, and that the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and Assamese ex-servicemen had jointly masterminded the scheme. He spoke to *Arabia* after his three-day visit to Assam. He said the holocaust could have been avoided — if government intelligence had read the situation correctly.

The RSS had mobilised its personnel from all over the country, RSS organiser Joshi from Karnataka was sent to Assam in preparation for the assault. Joshi camped in Assam for months.

Sait verified reports that survivors had been blinded in hospitals by Assamese personnel. He said the victims were now being treated under the supervision of Jamaat-Islami Hind, Calcutta.

Sait says that the new Assam government has rehabilitated 400 families which survived the Nellie massacre.

[*Arabia*, London, Sept. 1983]. □

Editorial

Contd. from page 2

parliamentarian, and speaker. Senior officers and Army generals had spoken about this. During his 30 years as a Minister holding different portfolios, he was a success in each and every job. That is why he is able to survive so long while other *Harijan* leaders perished within two years.

The Ruling Class is afraid of only those who challenge it intellectually. They will tolerate brilliant people only as long as they remain servants. The moment they challenge, they will be thrown out. This is what happened to Ram. Hindus want any number of servants. But if a servant aspires to be a master they start using one after another the four weapons. The problem with Ram is that despite equipped with all this intelligence, he is not intelligent enough to see that he will never, ever get the highest office. Will the Hindus ever make an Untouchable as the Prime Minister of this "holy land"? When they can't tolerate even a *shudra* like Lal Bahadur Shastri or Charan Singh, where is the chance for Ram? How can such a person be called intelligent when he can't understand this simple thing?

We find a serious contradiction in Ram. And if he has not noticed it, let him do it even at this late stage. Ram says he is "proud to be a Hindu and my critics know that I will never change my religion whatever the indignities." (*Sunday*, Oct. 16). He also says that Hindus despise him because he is an Untouchable. But he will remain an Untouchable as long as he is a Hindu. How stupid he must be not to understand this simple contradiction in him! The indignities that he suffers as an Untouchable are because of the fact he is

a Hindu. In the same *Sunday* he also admits that the Hindus "would have treated me better if I had been a Muslim." That means Ram knows that Hinduism does not believe in equality. In his book, *Caste Challenge in India* (Vision Books, 36-C Connaught Place, New Delhi-1, — 1980, pages 118, Rs. 50), he has clearly blamed Hinduism for the havoc of caste of which untouchability is a part. So we can't say he is not aware of the horrors of Hinduism. But the very same Ram tells *Sunday* that he will not quit Hinduism. The poor oppressed Ram does not want to get rid of the values of the oppressor. What a tragedy! If this is the case with such eminent persons like Ram, what about the dumb-driven illiterate, village-dwelling Untouchables? At least the Ramnad dt. (Tamil Nadu) Dalits came to know this and embraced Islam—several hundreds of them. (*Indian Express*, Nov. 3, 1983)

What to do with such intellectually corrupt people? The Ruling Class has corrupted hundreds of Dalits and made them *Harijans*. The best brains among Dalits are imprisoned in Govt. services & the worst brains have become *Harijans* as bonded labourers of political parties.

Even now it is not too late for Ram to jump into the Dalit liberation struggle which indeed is the beginning of India's freedom movement. He can never become the Prime Minister as long as he is a *Harijan*. He has all the capacity to shake the Ruling Class—even at this stage. He has the name, fame, the capacity and the money. If he wants to enter history, he can heed our SOS and jump into India's freedom struggle, sharpen caste contradictions. He has everything but

has he that intellectual honesty? *Harijans* tell us without political power they can't improve Untouchables. We also know this. But how will they get this power? Power is not given but taken. Is it possible under the existing socio-economic structure to get political power? Never.

The hope lies not in *Harijans* but in Dalits. Our appeal is addressed to the best brains and not to the worst brains. Those imprisoned in Govt. services must consider the lot of the millions of illiterate Dalits not benefitted by the reservations. This section is the genuine revolutionary class. Dalit Movement should be treated as the beginning of India's Freedom Movement. India has not become free. The "Independence" that India got (Aug. 15, 1947) was not for us. Dalits, persecuted minorities and OBCs comprising over 80% of India's population are not yet free. Only the Gandhis, Birlas and their cousins got freedom to persecute us. As long as we are not free, how can India be free? Therefore, Dalit movement that has begun all over India is the Freedom Movement. It may look disjointed, riven with rivalries, very much spilt, many a time leaderless. Does'nt matter. Unity will come out of crisis. Therefore, we must create crisis, invite crisis. Help sharpen caste contradictions. When the existing corrupt leadership goes, a militant Dalit leader-

ship will emerge. The biggest mistake of the Dalit movement is that it has not groomed enough women. In fact women are more revolutionary than men. Dalit movement if it has not made much headway, it is because women have not become the vanguard of this movement.

Of all the "movements" in India, Dalit movement is the most important movement. Persecuted minorities have to join this. Because, their Enemy and our Enemy is the same. In every respect the problems of both are all the same. The OBCs are also the victims of the Ruling Class which has refused to accept the Mandal Commission Report. Hence all these people have to join hands in the Freedom Movement. Intellectuals among Dalits have a big role to play in this Freedom Movement. In each and every place they should start training freedom-fighters identifying our allies. The freedom struggle should succeed before the 20th century ends. The 21st century shall be the Ambedkar Era. Therefore, the leadership of this Freedom Movement has rightly gone to the country's most revolutionary class, Dalits. There is no time to rest. The Dalit movement is the real Freedom Movement to free India from the socio-cultural-economic bondage. If Ram has any life left, let him join this Freedom Movement.

EDITOR : V. T. Rajshekar

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