

Deciphering Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's views on Tribal Development: Retrospect and Prospect

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Abstract: "Equality may be a fiction but nonetheless one must accept it as a governing principle."
-DR. B.R. Ambedkar

DR B. R. Ambedkar with his paramount foreseeing capacity, formulated so many constitutional, legal, political, social, economic, and educational safe guards for the comprehensive upliftment of tribals. Nevertheless, many of these provisions have been inactive or failed in its implementation in delivering the welfare to tribals. The policies which have come to address the problems of tribals and framed for the development of the same could not able to materialize to the expected level. Further on contrary to that, many neoliberal policies have been implementing with the manifesto of exploiting natural resources without much looking into its impact on the livelihood of tribals. On the other hand, the tribals living itinerant lives by moving village to village in search of livelihood, have been facing new challenges by the state and with their new laws which are in against to these tribal occupations. These tribals also facing socio economic exclusion due to the prevailing stigma and prejudice, which instigates the discrimination on these tribal communities by sedentary communities. Many of these communities also been branded as criminals, sorcerers, black magicians, robbers etc. These people always live with insecurity as they face hostility from the main stream society. The political representatives also in sensitive to the issues of tribals, since their number not decisive in realizing their political power. It is imperative to have comprehensive understanding of the tribal's history and culture accordingly; new policies can be frames to resolve the contemporary challenges of tribals. Thus, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar vision on tribal's development can be achieved.

Key words: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, tribal's development, constitutional, untouchability

1. INTRODUCTION:

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar laid a foundation by drafting the Indian Constitution to construct egalitarian society on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity by dismantling the ascribed existing Brahminical tyranny and Neo liberal exploitation. He is not just an architect of Indian constitution or a representative of Schedules castes and Scheduled tribes, but also the pioneer of democratic rights in India. He introduced the rationalist philosophy, through which he questioned each and every systemic discrimination and exploitation from existing inequalities. He introduced the idea justice, where people are entitled to have Social, Political and Economic justice in every aspect.

He diligently fought with British and Congress for the emancipation and upliftment of downtrodden sections, by providing them enough safeguards, rights and legal provisions. In this, he was clearly understood two important issues about tribes. One is tribals exploitation by colonial rulers and the second is tribals discrimination in Brahminical society. He was clear that many tribes living in villages have been facing discrimination by the upper caste Hindhu society, because they have been treated as lower and inferior to them. On the other hand, he was aware that, tribals who were still living in forests lost their livelihood, being exploited due to continuous encroachment of britishers and plain people into forest areas for their egotistical interests.

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar had observed that, since tribals are having the more or less same social status like Scheduled Castes, it is imperative to address their socio- economic and educational backwardness by creating necessary provisions in constitution and legal legislations. The following provisions are being institutionalised through Constitution such as, the appointment of a Minister-in-charge for Tribal welfare (Article 164); provision of administration of scheduled and tribal areas (Article 244); provision of grants from the Union Government to the states for the welfare of STs, and for raising the level of administration of scheduled areas (Article 275); protection and promotion of the claims of STs to services and posts (Article 335); the control of the Union Government over the administration of scheduled areas and the welfare of STs (Article 339). Above all are meant for the right share of resources, opportunities and autonomy of the tribals. Apart from the above,the Fundamental rights have been guaranteed in Indian constitution to protect the basic human rights along with the political rights. In the part IV of the Indian Constitution Directive Principles of State Policy featured to promote the ideals of socio economic democracy and the welfare state. Article 46 is to promote the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs and other weaker sections of society and also to protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Particularly to protect them by giving additional attention by the governance of the country. But, the vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has not been fulfilled due to lack of proper implementation of above provisions.

Tribals in India are not a homogenous identity, they do have diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture, living style which has been developed over the thousands of years by the nature of their environment and geo physical conditions. They differ across the time and space, they don't much connect to the main stream society or with any other tribe, they live within their own set of principles. So any policy which has been made and attempted to implement without having a comprehensive knowledge of tribes will definitely defeat its purpose.

The objectives of this paper are, 1. To understand Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of the Tribal Development and Constitution 2. To retrospect the plans and policies on Tribal Development and their performances. 3. Finally, to study the present status of tribals in terms of their socio-economics and educational development.

The Methodology of the paper is completely depending on the secondary data analysis. The data is taken from the various department such as Census Department, to study the demographic details of tribals, various NSSO reports have been studied to understand their poverty and educational and employment concerns, reports from the ministry of tribal affairs have been looked into to understand overall development of tribals in contemporary situations.

2. Dr.B.R Ambedkar's vision on Tribal Development and Indian Constitution:

Dr. B.R Ambedkar fought for the rights of weaker sections of society, who are in majority (SC, ST, OBC and Religious Minorities) but subjugated, discriminated and systematically exploited by the existing caste Hindu society. The rights which he secured for these communities really matters great to the same for their overall upliftment. He fought against both exploitations of Britishers and the exploitation that exists within Indian society. His vast knowledge on society and human civilizations along with his own life experiences made him to think and fight against all kinds of discriminations.

He clearly identified socio economic backwardness of tribals. He knows that tribals are the people who lived with the freedom without much any influence from the outside society. they used to have autonomy and rights over the forest resources. But, they had lost all those privileges with the advent Britishers in to the forest areas with their draconian forest laws and land regulations. Tribals had haunting memory by experiencing political, economic and cultural hegemony from east India company. Company's policy on tribals is to exploit their labour for generating revenue and controlling the forest resources by enacting new forest laws. They constructed modern transport systems likes railways and road ways in order to plunder the heavy raw materials (primarily agricultural products like cotton, jute, indigo, tobacco, rubber tea etc.) to their home lands. Since the Cost of building these modern transport was required more investment in capital and labour, so they did it by exploiting the tribals labour and forests for wood. In order to fulfill this huge investment, they started extracting more revenue, particularly from agricultural land. Forest lands also cleared for agriculture and tribals were forcefully brought under new laws, not permitted to mobile freely and not allowed to use forest resources, which was very essential part of their live.

By looking into all the above conditions Dr.B.R. Ambedkar drafted 5th Schedule for the provisions related to the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes and 6th Schedule to deal with the administration of tribal areas in the in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. the sixth schedule also designates tribal areas in Assam and Meghalaya where autonomous district councils and regional councils have been constituted with powers to make laws for management of land, forests, shifting of cultivation, appointment or succession of chief and headman, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and matters relating to village or town administration. Article 275 (1) of the constitution provides for grant-in-aid from the Union to the States for promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes or for raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas.

Article 244 in part X of the Indian constitution envisages a special system of administration for certain areas designated as 'scheduled areas and tribal areas. The scheduled areas are treated differently from the other areas in the country because they are inhabited by 'aboriginals' who are socially and economically rather backward, and special efforts need to be made to improve their condition, therefore, the whole of the normal administrative machinery operating in a state is not extended to the scheduled areas and the central government has somewhat greater responsibility for these areas (M.P Jain, 1987).

On the other hand, Tribals who lives in villages and plains are often discriminated by mainstream society, particularly by upper castes. Many of these tribes have been living nomadic lives partially dependent on forests and their specific occupations. They face discrimination and hostile situations from plain mainstream societies due to their different culture, tradition and ethnic practices. The existing caste system always considered these tribals as inferior and belong to the lower strata. Many of these tribal communities often suffered from untouchability. Here, Dr.B.R Ambedkar was curious about the conditions of Scheduled Tribes that they will just be instrumental in the hands of majority(his prophesy has proved right in the present context). And therefore, he wanted to have a separate commission for the Scheduled Tribes to look after their conditions and propose developmental plans for them. That's the reason he enshrined Article 342 especially for Scheduled Tribes. Thus, tribal development in the true sense and in the present context of India is in fact a post-independence concept and draws the spirit from the constitution itself.

Apart from this articles, we have Fundamental Rights (Art.12-35) applies to every citizen of the country. The Directive Principles of State Policies (Art.36-51) specifies the guidelines to the states to do every possible act to improve the conditions of all the citizens which includes the Scheduled Tribes (Mahendra Jadhav, 2016).

Apart from the above, Indian Constitution has been provided some holistic features to protect the tribals, which are like(a) Statutory recognition of tribal communities. (b) Creation of scheduled areas for the thorough development of the tribals. (c) Special representations in the parliament, in the legislative assemblies and local bodies. (d) Special privileges in the form of reservation of a certain percentage of posts in government services and seats in educational institutions. (e) Recognition of the right to use local language for administration and other purposes and to profess one's faith (Shod ganga).

In his book "Communal Deadlock And Ways to Solve It" (1945), he writes about the Aboriginal Tribes thus "...The Aboriginal Tribes have not as yet developed any political sense to make the best use of their political opportunities and they may easily become mere instruments in the hands either of a majority or a minority and thereby disturb the balance without doing any good to themselves. In the present stage of their development it seems to me that the proper thing to do for these backward communities is to establish a Statutory Commission to administer what are now called the 'excluded areas' on the same basis as was done in the case of the South African Constitution. Every Province in which these excluded areas are situated should be compelled to make an annual contribution of a prescribed amount for the administration of these areas."

With the above provisions Dr.B.R Ambedkar hoped that Tribal Development will come true with the effective implementation of constitutional provisions and welfare measures on tribals. His vision to bring egalitarian society with the ideas of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice will remove all kinds of systemic oppressions on weaker sections of society.

3. Plans and Policies on Tribal Development:

Tribal Development from the vision of The economic welfare of the state is established by the implementation of the Directive Principles of State Policy, in which role of government (policy maker and implementer) is indispensable to empower the weaker sections (SCs and STs).

Since the India adopted the mixed economy after independence with an idea of both public and private sector parallely work together in contributing to the Economic Development. In general, public welfare activities like health, education etc. are controlled by government whereas the production of consumer goods are dealt by private sector. With this, planning on Tribal Development started based on three different approaches (1). Isolationist (2). Assimilationist (3). Integrationist. The first approach was taken from the British regime, and is usually described as not to disturb them (tribals) much. The policy was to keep away the tribal population from the masses. The British took deliberate efforts not to develop communication in the tribal areas. But this approach was not stayed for long because, tribals needed certain development in their lives, particularly to improve their quality of life, they need education, health, nutritional food and proper housing this can be developed when they are being in touch with plain people.

The 'assimilationist' approach is the approach which paved the way for the tribal people to mingle with the neighbouring non-tribals. In India, the process of assimilation took place in different parts of the country, resulting in the gradual acceptance of Hindu culture by the tribals. The main criticism against this approach was that, this tried to change the tribals by imposing the non-tribal customs and traditions. The Advocates of this view supported a direct assimilation without waiting for a slow and long-drawn change over. The approach is also considered to be a failure because the dominant culture imposing over the tribals caused to practice the discrimination, subjugation by the Hindu culture, eventually this led to further deprivation of tribals.

The past experience of the policies of isolation and assimilation, forced the planners to take the middle way between the two, which is called the integrationist approach. The policy of integration consists of two types of measures for tribal development. (1) Protective (2) Promotional measures.

The former consists of land policies, forest policies and the policies to protect tribal culture and traditions, while the latter is the same as development and welfare programmes undertaken by the government (through plans) and other voluntary agencies to make the tribal life better through the integrationist approach. P.D Kulkarni states that "the policy of protection and development is undoubtedly same in itself, but it remains to be seen whether development is possible without upsetting the harmony that exists in the placid tribal life".

With this intuition Indian planning started with welfare programmes and other mechanisms to eradicate poverty, increase the standard of living by providing health, education and employment etc. to the tribals.

Different Five Year plans started by setting objectives to move forward with their approaches to address the underlying problems of tribals. The first plan was started with the isolation, a policy with non-interference. 1 Assisting them to develop their natural resources and to evoke a productive economic life wherein they will enjoy the fruits of their own labour and will not be exploited by more organized economic forces from outside; 2. It is not desirable to bring about changes in their religions and social life, except at the initiative of the tribal people themselves and with their willing consent; 3. It is accepted that there are many features in tribal life which should not

only be retained but also developed; and 4. The qualities of their dialects, and the rich content of their arts and crafts also need to be appreciated and preserved. but it is not easily practicable when tribal life has been influenced by social forces from without, and tribal communities have reached a certain degree of acculturation accompanied by the penetration of communications in the tribal areas, and of social services for the betterment of their lives." Second plan started, Ministry of Home Affairs provided fund to the Ministry of Community Development to establish Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks (SMPT) in areas with prominent tribal population.

Third Plan period, SMPT Blocks were renamed as Tribal Development Blocks (TDB) with the review commission of SMPT Blocks chaired by Verrier Elwin, and suggested it to be opened in all areas where over 60% of the population were tribals. Three Annual Plans (1966 -1969) Increased more funds to TDBS. By the time of Fourth Plan, one of the drawbacks of the functioning of TDBS became clear that their activities were not properly integrated with the general development plans for the region. The Fourth Plan tried to rectify this drawback by adopting the integrated area development approach. In these cases, attention was shifted from area development to development of identified individuals who qualified for special attention according to certain objective criteria. Particularly to The Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agencies (MFAL).

During the middle of the Fourth Five Year Plan, i.e., in the year 1972, the Planning Commission set up a "Task force on Development of Tribal Areas" with L.P. Vidyarthi as the Chairman. In their appraisal, the task force observed that in spite of various kinds of investment by the State and Central governments for tribal development in successive plans, the problem of the tribals reflected in primitive methods of agriculture, land alienation, indebtedness, adverse effects of industrialization, low rate of literacy, poor health of nutrition etc., had not been solved (P.K. Bhowmick,1981). Taking into the recommendations of Task Force on the Development of Tribal Areas 5th Five Year Plan was adopted with new approach called Tribal Sub-Plan. It aimed to integrating the developmental activities of the government and the semi government organizations by financing through the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP). The Sub-Plan aimed at narrowing the gap between the levels of development of tribal and other areas, and to improve the quality of life of the tribal communities in general. The percentage wise investment for tribal development was high during the Fifth Five Year Plan with 3.01% of total plan outlay. The 6th plan had continued with 5th Sub Plan Approach, with the objectives of 1. A progressive reduction in the incidents of poverty and unemployment. 2. Improving the quality of life through minimum needs programme. 3. A reduction in inequalities of income and wealth. 4. Infrastructure development for further exploration of potential of the tribal region. 7th Five Year plan made more emphasis on The programme of tribal development with ITDP also without any basic or major changes in the approach, Pattern or structure, but better co-ordination was sought between various agencies, and social services were given priority. LAMPS (Large Agricultural Marketing Societies) were to be strengthened through broadening their popular base. Seventh Plan paid attention towards the rehabilitation of poor tribals and the removal of tribal women's backwardness.

The 8th plan had been implemented with prime motive provide minimum basic amenities like education, health and employment to the all sections. Subsequently 9th five year plan for social justice and equality, and prepared the strategy to achieve a seven percent growth rate for the economy. The main objectives of the Ninth Plan are the generation of adequate productive employment, eradication of poverty, empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups. It aims to ensure food and nutritional security for all, particularly the vulnerable sections of society. For approaching to this goal, the government of India enacted an amendment to the constitution of India (73rd Amendment) for ensuring representation of backward and marginalized communities eg. Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and women in Panchayati Raj institutions. The principal task of the Ninth Plan was to usher in a new era of people oriented planning, in which not only the government at the Center and the States, but the people at large, particularly the poor, can fully participate. 10th five year plan for human development, 11th five year plan towards faster and more inclusive growth and now 12th five year plan was made to achieve its objective faster, sustainable and inclusive growth (Shod ganga).

From the above Five Year Plans many tribal development programmes have been introduced by the government. Programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rosgar Yojana (JRY) Prime Ministers Rosgar Yojana(PMRY) and Training for Self Employment for Rural youth (TRYSEM). All these schemes were introduced to provide employment and eliminate poverty in tribals. All these schemes are implemented in the state by District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA's) in collaboration with Commercial and Cooperative Banks. For improving the economic status of tribals, special programmes were launched, during 1980's, mainly (a) the Asset Programme and (b) the Employment Programme. The Asset Programme aims at the overall integrated development of rural life through the removal of poverty and unemployment in rural areas. In this programme productive assets are directly given to the poor. It is believed that income generated from these productive assets would not only be sufficient to repay the bank loans but will help the assisted families to cross the 'poverty line'. This programme is popularly known as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). The earlier employment schemes were temporary in nature but the employment programme launched from Oct1980, popularly known as

National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) is considered as a permanent plan programme. MNREGA has been initiated in tribal areas also to generate employment and income to the tribals.

All these plans have been fairly not able to reach the desired ends to accelerate the living standard and bringing inclusiveness of the tribes. Many policies attempted to address the underlying problems of tribes living in both forests and plains, their main concentration is on the accelerated development of the tribes to enable them to catch up with more advanced sections of the society. but apparently these policies got failed due limited understanding of the same related to their history, ethnicity, culture, beliefs, customs and practices etc.

4. Tribals and their Present Conditions

The percentage of Scheduled Tribe population has marginally increased from 7.83% in 1981 to 7.95% in 1991. The Scheduled Tribe population has increased by 25.67% during the decade of 1981 - 1991. The percentage of scheduled tribe population in total population further increased from 8.2 per cent in the year 2001 to 8.6 in the year 2011. Apparently their socio economic conditions have not been improved.

Coming to the basic amenities, 53.1 per cent of the population in all social groups having good houses but whereas tribals having only 40.6 per cent good houses. And, the percentage of latrine facility having within the premises in all social groups are 46.9 per cent but the tribals have only 22.6 per cent. Still 87.5 per cent of the population from the tribals depend on Fire-wood/Crop residue/ Cow dung cake/Coal, Lignite, Charcoal for domestic cooking purposes, but in general, out of all social groups only 63.99 per cent of people depends on it.

Coming to the education details of tribals, according to 1991 census, 29.6% of the Scheduled Tribe population in the age group 7 years and above were literate, the literacy rate being 40.65% for males and 18.19% for females. These figures are much lower than the corresponding figures for the total population of India. The tribal literacy rate was low in Andhra Pradesh (17.16%) and Rajasthan (19.44%). In the case of females, the literacy is extremely low in states like Rajasthan (4.4%), Andhra Pradesh (8.7%), Orissa (10.2%), Madhya Pradesh (10.7%), Bihar (14.8%) and Uttar Pradesh (15.0%). Subsequently according to the 2011 census, 63 per cent of the tribals at the age group of 5 years are literates, whereas in all social groups it is 73 per cent. The below table explains the percentage distributions of tribals and all social groups at different levels of education.

Percentage distribution of persons of age 15 years and above by level of general education							
Level of general education							
social group	not literate	literate & up to primary	middle	secondary	higher secondary	diploma/certificate	graduate & above
rural male							
ST	35.8	26.4	18.3	11.1	5.7	0.6	2.2
all social group	26.0	25.3	20.5	14.7	8.0	1.0	4.5
rural female							
ST	58.3	21.7	10.3	5.7	2.7	0.3	0.9
all social group	49.8	22.0	13.5	8.2	4.2	0.4	2.0
rural person							
ST	47.0	24.2	14.3	8.4	4.2	0.4	1.6
all social group	37.8	23.7	17.0	11.5	6.2	0.7	3.2
urban male							
ST	12.7	17.6	19.3	18.2	14.3	2.6	15.3
all social group	10.4	15.9	17.5	19.5	13.9	2.9	19.8
urban female							
ST	31.3	16.7	15.3	14.7	11.1	1	9.8
all social group	23.6	17.2	15.3	15.9	12.1	1.3	14.7
urban person							
ST	21.8	17.1	17.3	16.5	12.8	1.8	12.6
all social group	16.7	16.4	16.4	17.7	13.0	2.1	17.3

source: Report no. 543 of NSS 66th round, 2009-10

The above table clearly gives the picture about the educational levels of tribals. Tribals percentage is more in illiteracy compared to all social groups. At different levels of education standards, tribals are always below than the all social groups, this indicates the educational backwardness of tribals. Policies and schemes which came to address the educational backwardness and illiteracy of tribals are failed to give the estimated results. Their dropout ratio is also more; this ratio is increasing when they reach to the higher educational levels. This clearly implies that tribals are not getting proper encouragement for entering into higher educational levels.

The education conditions of tribals even worsened after the 1991 economic liberalization and privatization. Privatization of education, with unbearable fees payments and simultaneously decline in the quality of government school resulted deprivation of tribals for getting education. The privatization of education and employment is mainly conspired to deprive tribals and other weaker sections not to avail the reservation provisions which are guaranteed by Indian constitution.

According to National Family Health Survey 2005-06, infant mortality rate of tribals is 62.1 which is more than the all social groups infant mortality that is 57 per 1000 live births. Child mortality of tribals is 35.8 and all social groups child mortality is 18.4 per 1000 live births. Prevalence of anemia in tribal women is 68.5, which is higher than the all social groups women 55.3 per 1000 live births. According to Tendulkar's methodology, percentage tribal population in below poverty line is 47.4 in rural and 30.4 in urban.

Percentage of population Below Poverty Line(social groups wise) -2004-05								
Rural					Urban			
	ST	SC	OBC	Others	ST	SC	OBC	Others
All India	47.3	36.8	26.7	16.1	33.3	39.9	31.4	16
<i>Legend SC = Scheduled Castes, ST = Scheduled Tribes, OBC = Other backward classes</i>								
<i>Source: Planning Commission</i>								

According to the planning commission data in 2004-05, Scheduled Tribes are having highest level of poverty 47.3 per cent compared to the all other social categories in rural areas. And in urban areas after SCs are highest in poverty 39.9 per cent followed by STs 33.3 per cent. The unemployment rate is more among the tribals compared to the all other social classes. Particularly in the context of post liberalization, where their occupations became redundant with the advent of globalization and liberalization reforms which introduced new machine product to displace existing traditional handmade products of tribals.

Even though many attempts were made to address the existing tribal problems, there are no much advancements in the lives and livelihoods of the tribals. The different approaches to address the problems of tribals like Isolationist, assimilationist and integrationist failed to meet their objectives. Policies have not been adopted with pragmatic and holistic approach to the Development of tribals. Apart from this, new problems and challenges had come to affect the livelihoods of tribals. Particularly issues related to land alienation, displacement, discriminations in educational institutions, displacement of tribal occupations etc. Many tribes who displaced from their occupations became vagabonds failed to adjust to the new existing capitalist situations. Tribals have been facing the discrimination, stigma, prejudices from mainstream Hindu caste society is really vulnerable. Many tribal have been murdered by branding them as robbers and sorcerers. Since tribal's are a minority and their number is not much decisive in deciding the political power of politicians, it led to the cornering the tribal communities. Many tribal representatives became like stooges under the aegis of mainstream dominant forces and the state. Hence the idea of welfare and social justice (Dr. Ambedkar's vision) of tribals remained a utopia.

5. CONCLUSION:

The present miserable conditions of tribals are quite evident that, the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision and perspective on tribals are not fulfilled by the policies and schemes so far implemented by the Governments and executives. Many constitutional provisions rights of tribals have been violated by not practicing and implementing them. It is imperative now to bring the upcoming policies with the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision to remove the existing backwardness by creating equal access to every opportunity, particularly in the matters of education, employment, health, housing, etc. It is the responsibility of state and every citizen to ensure the equal treatment of tribals with dignity. All the right and provision which are ensured in Indian constitution need to be protected without any changes. All the policies and schemes need to be framed and implemented by having full understanding of the tribals regarding their culture and diversity, ethnicity, practices, ethnicity, and other requirement etc. A special emphasis need to be made to empower them in education, health, employment and other developments. Their rights need to be guaranteed and there shall be no atrocities and discrimination against tribals based on their culture and traditions. All the constitutional provisions and rights which have framed by the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar need to be implemented strictly without any modifications.

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