



Research Paper

Social Transformation of Gujjar Tribe in Saal Valley of Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh*

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ABSTRACT

Social transformation is the process by which an individual alters the socially ascribed social status of their parents into a socially achieved status for themselves which occurs at individual level. It also refers to large scale social change as in cultural reforms or transformations within the social system. Social transformation of the Gujjars who are Hindu as well as Muslim tribe in Himachal Pradesh is the main thrust of this paper. They are nomadic and rear buffalo. They shift to the plains in winters and came back in spring to the mountains.

In Chamba district they are confined in saal, churah and lihal region of the district. In spite of having scheduled tribe status, they are one of the most backward communities in the district and for their upliftment, a comprehensive planning is needed. The present paper is based on the primary study conducted by the researchers with a broad objective to see the social transformation by applying exploratory and descriptive research methods and non-participatory observation. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used by applying suitable statistical tools and interview schedule have been administered in 20 villages of 8 panchayats on 42 respondents. The result of the study concluded that there is slow social transformation and lot of work still expected with strong political and bureaucratic will to transform the lives of the Gujjars.

Keywords: Gujjar, Scheduled Tribe, Nomadic, Backward

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, tribe can be viewed as a social group existing outside of civil society. A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated with civil societies. It is perhaps the term most readily understood and used by the general public. There are an estimated one hundred and fifty million tribal individuals worldwide, constituting around forty percent of indigenous individuals. Although nearly all tribal people are indigenous, some are not indigenous to the areas where they now live. "Tribe" is a contested term due to its roots of being defined by outsiders during the period of colonialism. The word has no shared referent, whether in political form, kinship relations or shared culture. Some argue that it conveys a negative connotation of a timeless unchanging past. To avoid these implications, some have chosen to use the terms "ethnic group", or nation instead.

Etymologically, the English word *tribe* occurs in 12th century Middle English literature as referring to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The word is from old French *tribu*, in turn from Latin *tribus*, referring to the original tripartite ethnic division of the Ancient Roman state.

The tribes in India forms an important part of the total population. It represents an element in Indian society which is integrated with the culture mosaic of our civilisation. The tribal population of India constitutes nearly 8 percent of the total population. There are a number of tribes in India, spread over different parts at

different levels of socio-economic development. They live all over the country from the foot hill of the Himalayas to the lands tip of Lakshadweep and from the plains of Gujarat to the hills in the North-East. According to 2011 census, the numerical strength of the scheduled tribes in India stood at 104.2 million. Madhya Pradesh leads all other States as regards the tribal population. It is followed by Maharashtra and Orissa. The names of tribes like; *the Kurumba, the Irula, the Panga in South India; the Asura, the Saora, the Oraon, the Gond, the Santhal, the Bhil in Central India; the Bodo, the Ahom in North-East India;* are found in old classical Indian literature

Tribes in Himachal Pradesh

According to the Census 2011 the population of Himachal Pradesh is 6,864,602 of which 3, 92,126 (5.71%) belongs to Scheduled Tribes. The following tribes have been listed in the State:

Sr. No.	Name of Tribe
1	Bhot, Bodh
2	Gaddi
3	Gujjar
4	Jad, Lamba, Khampa
5	Kanaura, Kinnara
6	Lahaula
7	Pangwala
8	Swangla
9	Beta, Beda
10	Demba, Gara, Zoba

There are five notified tribal regions of *Kinnaur, Lahaul, Spiti, Pangi and Bharmaur* in Himachal Pradesh. At present these areas in have undergone significant social transformation in terms of literacy, educational patterns, societal structure etc.

Polyandry and polygamy marriage practices are on the decline and the incidence of child marriages has declined in almost all the tribal areas. Presently maximum residents of tribal areas speak in Hindi and English beside their own tribal dialects. The proportion of nuclear families was higher than joint families, indicating a changing social milieu within the tribal region. Overall literacy rates of the region have increased and female literacy has also increased significantly from 7.31% in 1971 to 50% in 2001 and gender disparity has also reduced. There is also a considerable change in enrolment in primary education which is higher as compared to the secondary and higher education. The housing and sanitation conditions have improved in some of the tribes, particularly in Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti and conditions of some tribes is pathetic even today and Gujjar tribe residing in Chamba district is one of them.

Gujjar Tribe in Himachal Pradesh

C.G. Parsons believes that the Gujjars settlement in Chamba region was a mid-nineteenth century phenomenon. He argues that, “The Gujjar are said to be a new importation within the last forty or fifty years and are found with their herds of buffaloes and cows on the slopes of many of the mountain ranges in the Ravi Valley. They migrate, as a rule, in spring and autumn between the outer hills and the high ranges, but do not cross the Pir Panjal Range.”

Parsons arguments and even my field surveys in Chamba makes it clear that the Gujjars largely wandered in Chamba in the two main ranges of the Himalayas i.e., *Dhauladhar range* and the *Pir Panjal range* and they did not cross the Pir Panjal range. Gujjars in Chamba generally recalls their migrations from the Jammu region. Gujjars narrate that they accompanied the *Rani of Jammu to Chamba* who was married to the *Raja of Chamba*. They were said to have been sent by the King of Jammu to provide milk to her and also to the people of Chamba.

Kamal Prashad Sharma’s survey also confirms the presence of this legend current among the Gujjars of Chamba who records that “Gujjars being invited by the queen of Chamba about 300-350 years ago for the supply of milk for the royal family and people.” However, Kamal Prashad Sharma also mentions another legend current among the Gujjars about their migration in Chamba region that the “Gujjars were allowed to enter the erstwhile state of Chamba as a reward for old Gujjar woman who had saved the life of a close relative of the royal prince of Chamba of that time.”

These legends, nonetheless confirm Gujjar migration in Chamba from Jammu region. Chamba being rich in grazing grounds in the forests and water resources attracted Gujjars to migrated here. The colonial records such as gazetteers of Chamba and Forests reports of Chamba confirms that the Gujjars migrated in Chamba due to the availability of grazing facilities mostly available in the *Saal, Churah and Lihal* valleys in the area as Gujjars used to get the auction of grazing lands and pay *trini* (grazing tax) to state for pasture facilities. Probably, Gujjars migrated to the Jammu and Kashmir region from *Rajputana, Gujrat and Kathiawar region,*

which confirmed from the census of India-1941. There was a “*Satahsiya Famine*’ in Rajputana, Gujarat and Kathiawar region and Gujjars have fodder for their cattle so they migrated to the place where fodder was available, the region was Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

In another wave Gujjars seems to have migrated to Kashmir from the Gujrat town of undivided Punjab. This suggests that Gujjar in Jammu and Kashmir migrated from Rajasthan or also from Gujrat town of undivided Punjab. Gujjars in Chamba district occupied deep forest zones known as *dhars* which are part of *Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas*. *Dhars* fall in the villages of Chamba and one village have two or more *dhars*. Gujjars occupied the *dhars* of the *Sadar Chamba, Churah, Bhattiyat and Bharmour wizarat*.

The area of the *Sadar Chamba wizarat* was of triangle shape and fell into Dhauladhar range of the Himalayas. Churah wizarat was spread in Saho range; while Bharmour wizarat occupied the area of *Tundah range*. Throughout the colonial period Gujjars used to migrate into *these dhars in April and returned back to the plains of Chamba in October*. Though some of them got settled in the hills like ordinary zamindars in the Colonial period. Each family has its *own dhars or grazing ground* in the mountains to which it always returns. Some have permanently settled in the hills. Even after independence Gujjar could be identified along these *dhars*. In the Census of report 1981 (Chamba district) it is illustrated that, “A limited number of Gujjar families residing in the district are permanent inhabitants and are found in Churah, Chamba and Bhattiyat tehsil and Salooni sub-tehsil. Some of the Gujjars also migrate to the district that comes during summer to graze their cattle on high pastures and move down to the plains before winter.”

Thus, Gujjars in Chamba even to the present day live in the *dhars* due to grazing and water facilities and come down in the plains only in the winter. Thus, generally Gujjars spent their summers in the *dhars* and come down in the plains of *Chamba, Kangra and Una* in winters. *Dhars*, where Gujjar settlements are still continued in *Shugand, Sara, Jamuhar, Ainpukhar, and Joul dhars* in Chamba.

Objective of the Paper

Prime aim of this paper is to document the social transformation of the lifestyle and economy of Gujjar tribe in Saal Valley in Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh. This is mainly a comparative analysis of the conditions of the Gujjar tribe by taking last ten years as a reference.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesised that the Gujjar people are lacking basic amenities like; *electricity, pucca house, good roads etc*. They are living at height on *Dhars* which are usually inaccessible or not easy to access and because of this they legged behind in the process of development and not using the benefits of the various govt. schemes except MNREGA. Psychologically, they have developed negative mind-set about their conditions and expecting help in their transformation from the government. Though govt. through different schemes is doing lot of things, but because of ignorance they are not making the best use of such schemes and continued to be backward and poor.

Study Area



Keeping in view prime objective and hypothesis in mind, it was decided to conduct study in the Saal Valley in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh on Gujjars. The rationale to select this area is maximum availability of Gujjars and their pathetic condition. To social transformation, 20 villages, from 8 panchayats have been selected randomly by using cluster sampling method and the respondents have been selected by using simple random sampling method.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on descriptive and exploratory study conducted in the research setting. Any descriptive and exploratory type of study depends upon two main sources of data, namely; *primary and secondary*. The former implies *organization of the field work* and the latter refers to *the survey of available related literature on the topic i.e., books journals, magazines, newspapers, etc.* The present study has been conducted by using both methods. The first part of the study is based on *descriptive method* while the second part of the study is based on *exploratory method*.

III. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, interview schedule pertaining to variables such as; *age, sex, social condition, marriage and education* has been prepared and administered on 42 respondents, covering 20 villages and 8 panchayats. Along with face-to-face interview conducted by the researcher by using interview schedule, non-participatory observation has also been used. Stratified Sampling has been used to select respondents. The received responses *tabulated, interpreted and empirically analyzed by using pi-charts and tables*.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the basis of above description, it can be stated that as per the mandate, objective of the study, data has been collected on selected variables from already decided respondents from selected villages and research clusters (Panchayats). Along with the collection of data, non-participatory observation method has also been used while interviewing them and notes have been prepared even out of the variables included in the interview schedule. During interaction, some interesting information have been shared by the respondents. To document the responses, both qualitative as well as quantitative methods of data collection and interpretation have been used. Quantitative responses have been tabulated while qualitative and the narratives have been used in the description of the tables. Following results and findings has been drawn from study on the social transformation of Gujjar tribe:

Table:1
Showing Panchayat and Village wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Name of Panchayat	Name of Village	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Palieur	Nainhu	01	02.39
		Muswari	01	02.39
		Gadotha	02	04.76
		Kabara	01	02.39
2.	Chadiara	Chadiara	01	02.39
3.	Barour	Andraloo	02	04.76
		Chambi	01	02.39
4.	Jadera	Chamari	02	04.76
		Chadiara	05	11.89
5.	Kidi	Sahalo	03	07.13
		Dhagai	01	02.39
6.	Paro	Chadaga	05	11.89
		Sanocha	01	02.39
		Kumral	01	02.39
7.	Saho	Sunerka	03	07.13
		Bhati Beyi	01	02.39
		Jhikaru	04	09.52
		Dehrifatti	03	07.13
		Kot	03	07.13
8.	Guad	Kalot	01	02.39
		Total	42	100.00

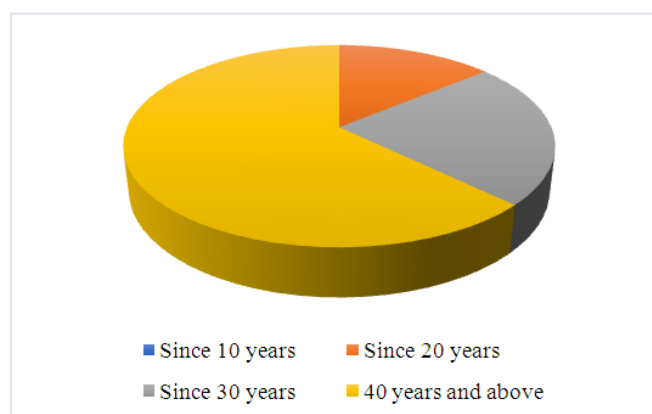
Selection of village for any research plays very vital role and be decisive and result oriented. For this research 8 panchayats and fourteen villages of Saal valley in Chamba district have been chosen because of the fact that maximum concentration of Gujjar tribal population is residing in these villages. An attempt has been made to give representation to many villages of saal valley where the maximum concentration of Gujjars is found.

Chadiara and *Chadaga* villages of *Jadera* and *Paro* panchayats respectively got maximum representation i.e., 11.89 percent each because this village has more household as compare to others. Followed by this, *Jhikaru* village of *Saho* panchayat got 09.52 percent. *Sahalo*, *Sunerka*, *Dehrifatti* and *Kot* got 07.13 percent each. *Gadotha*, *Andraloo* and *Chamari* villages got 04.76 each. And *Nainhu*, *Muswari*, *Kabara*,

Chadiara, Chambi, Dhagai, Sanocha, Kumral, Bhati Beyi and Kalot villages have got 02.39 percent representation in study sample.

Table:2
Showing the Total Number of Years Living in the Village

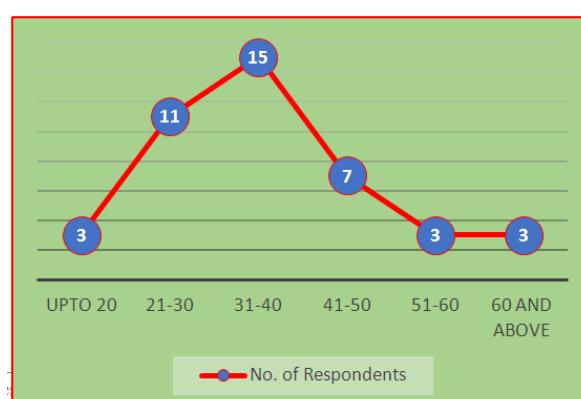
Sr. No.	Number of Years	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	10	00	00.00
2.	20	06	13.95
3.	30	10	23.26
4.	40 & above	27	62.79
	Total	43	100.00



Some people have migrated from other villages while some people are living there since birth. Maximum years of people living in the same village goes to for the last 40 years and more i.e., 62.79 percent. Followed by this, 23.26 percent goes to the people who are living there for the last 30 years. Minimum percentage goes to the people who are living there for the last 20 years i.e., 13.95 percent. It was observed that these people are still living without basic amenities of life like; *kutchha house, no electricity and no water connection, no telephones, no road connectivity and no knowledge of governmental schemes.*

Table:3
Showing Age wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Age	No. of Responses	Percentage
1.	Upto 20	03	07.14
2.	21-30	11	26.19
3.	31-40	15	35.72
4.	41-50	07	16.67
5.	51-60	03	07.14
6.	60 and above	03	07.14
	Total	42	100.00

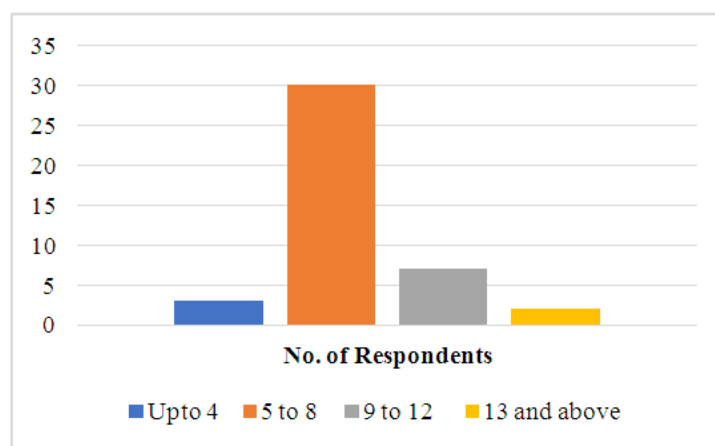


Age plays important role to decide status of anybody and along with this it also assigns role. Social system works with interdependence of status and role.

As it is clear from the above table (table 3) that the maximum representation in study area got 35.72 percent ranging between 31-40 years. Followed by this, the percentage of respondents between 21-30 age group is 26.19 and age group between 41-50 years is 16.67 percent. The elder age group 51-60 and 61 & above (07.14 percent) have been interviewed to add mature perspective to the study. It was observed during data collection that youth in study area are hopeful to improve their socio-economic conditions and are trying to get their share in coming time. All Gujjars in study area are *Suni*. *Shiya* are not found in Saal valley of Chamba district.

Table:4
Showing Members of Family of the Respondent

Sr. No.	No. of Members of Family	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Upto 4	03	07.14
2.	5-8	30	71.40
3.	9-12	07	16.76
4.	13 and above	02	04.76
	Total	42	100.00



Family is a fundamental unit of society. The size of family in Gujjar tribe in the study area usually remains large and which is responsible for their bad living conditions. But recently the size of family has been decreased in some cases. As it is depicted in above table and figure, maximum number of family members is 5-8 and its percentage is maximum i.e. 71.4 percent. Followed by this, family having 9-12 members got 16.76 percent. Family having upto 4 members got 07.14 percent and family having 13 & above members got minimum percentage i.e. 04.76 percent. In study area, people are aware of their poor living conditions and they have a fear of upbringing of children in such a minimum income and amenities at home.

Table:5
Showing Number of Wives of the Respondents

Sr. No.	No. of wives	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	1	31	83.78
2.	More than 1	06	16.22
	Total	37#	100.00

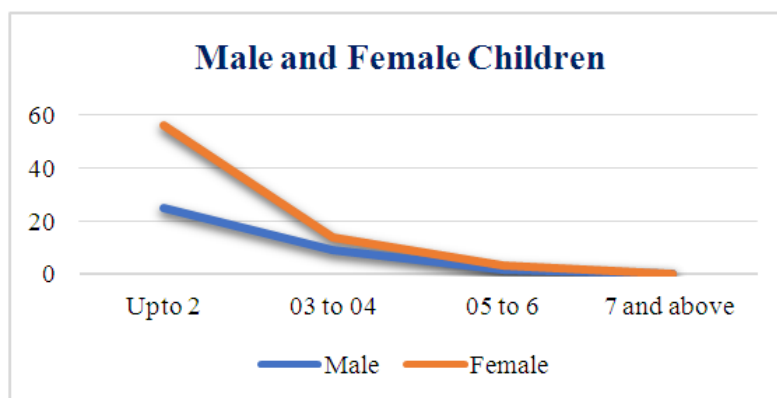
Five respondents were not married.

It is a tradition among Gujjar tribe to marry more than one wife. Gujjar tribe practice polygamy. But in this study, this tradition seems to be decreasing now, as the percentage of more than one wife is 16.22 and percentage of respondents having one wife is 83.78 percent. This shows positive trend in Gujjar tribe. It may be because of increase in education level of the Gujjars, earlier it may be because of the fact that they need more people to take care of their traditional occupation of buffalo rearing but now this profession is also decreasing and Gujjar are adopting now settled life and also make use of vehicle to carry their buffalo to the plains and back, so they don't need more wives and more children.

Table:6
Showing number of Children of the Respondents

Sr. No.	No. of Children	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1.	Upto 2	25	69.44	31	83.79
2.	3-4	09	25.00	05	13.51
3.	5-6	02	05.56	01	02.70

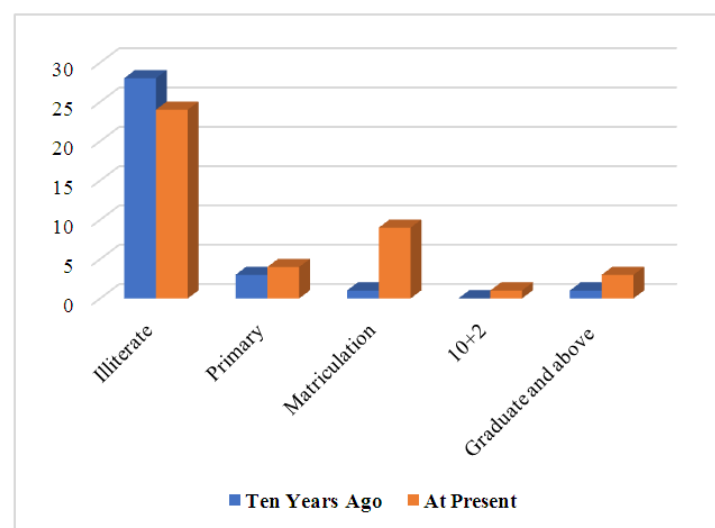
4.	7 and above	00	00.00	00	00.00
	Total	36	100.00	37	100.00



Desire for male child in any religion or community has been there since ages and present study area is not exception in this regard. As it is clear from above table (table 6) that there are more girls as compare to boys. Gujjar tribe being buffalo rearing tribe male child is needed to continue their traditional occupation. So, in hope of male child family got female child. Number of female children in research area is 37 and male child is 36. In most of the cases, there are 2 to 3 females and only one male. Again, this shows that for cattle rearing they need a male child. This shows the people now are aware of population schemes inaugurated by the government and they are supporting policies and programmes of government.

Table:7
Showing the Educational Profile of Respondents

Sr. No.	Level of Education	Ten Years Ago		At Present	
		Number of Responses	Percentage	Number of Responses	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	28	84.85	24	58.54
2.	Primary	03	09.09	04	09.76
3.	Matriculation	01	03.03	09	21.95
4.	10+2	00	00.00	01	02.43
5.	Graduate and above	01	03.03	03	07.32
	Total	33	100.00	41	100.00



Comparative analysis as shown in the table and figure above it is clear that there is a big difference between both situations. It is clear from the above figure that ten years ago, people were more illiterate as compared to present time. Ten years ago, there were more illiterates' i.e. 84.85 percent and graduation was done

by only 9.09 percent in the population. At present the illiterates are only 58.54 percent. Primary education was pursued by 09.09 percent each. Matriculation and graduation were done by 03.03 percent each in the population. But, at present matriculation is done by 21.95 percent people and 10+2 is done by 02.43 percent of people. Graduation is done by 07.32 percent of people and primary education is pursued by 09.76 percent of people in researched area. This shows the improvement in the education system in study area. Respondents are less than usual as ten years ago remaining respondents were underage and they were not in school. One respondent has pursued his education from Islamic school known as *Madrassa*.

V. CONCLUSION

In the nut shell, we conclude that the conditions of Gujjar are more or less the same. But there is a slight improvement in their social condition. By profession, Gujjars are nomadic herders, which do not allow them to go to any educational institution, so that they can improve their status. Earlier only some of the respondents got education in their religious places which is informal education. Still today, majority of Gujjar population lives in the traditional '*Gujjar Kotha*', which is not habitable according to present day human right norms. Gujjars are given the status of scheduled tribe in 1950 along with other scheduled tribes of Chamba district but the benefit of reservation and other constitutional provisions are still to reach to them. It would be interesting to see the real causes behind their backwardness.

It may be because of many factors like; administrative failure, non-awareness of this tribe, nomadic nature of Gujjars, non-availability of effective NGO/CBO or political leadership, may be few to count, following recommendations from this study can be presented to resolve the investigated problems:

1. It is recommended that the *Ministry of Tribal Affairs*, sociologists and anthropologists should come forward to find the real causes of their backwardness.
2. There should be an intensive research with effective policy interventions at political as well as bureaucratic level so that their backwardness can be converted into prosperity and they can include in the mainstream of society.
3. There should be a comparative study between *Gaddi, Pangwala and Gujjar* tribes to document the socio-economic transformation of these tribes and comparatively advanced tribes; Gaddi and Pangwala and their success stories must be replicated to Gujjars also.

It is also expected that the govt. will take corrective measures at the earliest and ensure constitutional and other benefits of tribal and raise their status and hopefully their condition will improve over time with effective political and bureaucratic interventions.

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