

Mahayogi Swami Sitaramdasji Maharaj's Bhaktiyoga – Rituals A study

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Abstract

A holy soul like Mahayogi Swami Sitaramdasji appears in the world by taking a body and to save the seekers, God himself wears a human cloak. In the 18th century, a similiary Lord Sitaramdasji Maharaj descended on this earth in 1811 on the day Rama Navami. The life of such a great men only complement their teaching. His life is a path which symbolizes the reality and truthfulness of his teachings.

Revrend, Param Sadguru Swami Sitaramdasji Maharaj always used to explain in simple words, the gist out of the experience got through many spiritual preaching - listening during the course of his tours all over the world and self-experience (Atmanubhuti), to the devotees (Mumukshu) coming to him. Swamiji established both the worship - Saguna (with form) and Nirguna (formless). Being blessed to the devotees, he guided them for devotion to the Saguna- Lord ShriRamaji in the loving child form, by strictly practicing virtuous chastity (Bramcharya) and truth. Also, it has been established that worshipping the Lord by chanting and devotion is the best path. The great saint (Maharshi) said that devotional worship of the Lord that is surrender, is called Ishawarpranidhana.

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् | (Prabhupaad, 1998)

Yogeshwar (Lord Krishna) said in BhagavadGeeta – The Lord is Omnipotent, he can give everything pleasingly to his surrendered devotee according to his will Swamiji conceptualize for Nirguna Bhakti (Formless Worship), with due rituals; but at the same time, for that need of Sadguru is also established. From his preaching inscribed in his texts – “Man ki kahani Manko Sunana” and “Atmasukhanubhava”; which reveal that intellect is the means for offering the devotion and the devotees also get known at every

step, about his memorized supreme knowledge inscribed in the spiritual scripts – Veda, Vedant, Smruti and Prasthantrayee, despite having education up to second standard only.

Keywords :- Swami Sitaramdasji, Sadguru, shree Ramji, God, Devotion, Rituals, Nirguna, Saguna, Love, Surrender, Moksha.

Aims

In this present research paper, Bhakti yoga as directed by Swamiji has been described. An attempt has been made to make Swamiji's thoughts reflected in his own instinct research method.

Method

Analytical method has been used in this present research paper.

Introduction

पाँच पुत्र थे इन ब्राह्मण को, माता पिता के मन भाये |
सबसे छोटे बालक ईनके जग के तारण को आये ||

(Belurkar, 1966) From childhood, filling Lord's love in the heart of the child Sitaram asked everyone, where will I find Rama? On going to Gurukul in teaching, he asked the same question to Guruji. Then Guruji said, which Rama ?

एक राम दशरथ का बेटा | एक राम घट घट मे बैठा |

एक राम का सकल पसारा | एक राम दुनिया से न्यारा || (Belurkar, 1966)

How can one whose hearth is restless in devotion to God sit sluggishly. At the age of 11, leaving the world at home, the little boy “Dhruvmann” (Sthtitaprajnya) left to meet the Lord. The intention of BhaktiYoga is to make one's development spiritually by keeping unrelenting loving, dedicated devotion to his preferred God – ‘Sadguru’. Other means of attainment of salvation such as- GyanYoga, KarmaYoga, LayaYoga, HathaYoga, are there in addition but the BhaktiYoga is the same most accessible and simple path. Bhakti Yoga explains that the greatest gain out of love is the love only. The love itself is in the form of God. The best definition of devotion stated in these words, -The deep loving

sense for chanting, memorizing your name in my heart and mind should never come to end as deep passion in the mortal worldly matters, pleasures has in the ignorant people'. Devotional worship of the Lord is like the strong boat for the living beings lying in the sea in the form of worldly concerns. Devotional worship - Bhakti is divided into two parts Saguna (with form) and Nirguna (formless), on the basis of rituals. In Saguna Bhakti (with form), the incarnated- Vibhuti are worshipped. Whereas in Nirguna Bhakti (formless) divine knowledge – the Almighty Lord is worshipped. This Bhakti is devoted to the 'Sakara' and 'Savishesh', the domain of God is in the heart of the devotee. In Saguna Bhakti 'Leelas' of incarnations are given importance. Whereas in Nirguna Bhakti deep meditation is of importance.

Swamiji's Virtuous devotion (Saguna Bhakti)

यह योगी अति निर्भय प्रिय है ,राम उपासक भाई |

अष्टप्रहर समाधि, ध्यान मगन गुण गाई || (Maharaj R. T., 1966)

Great divine men like Swamiji are the pillars of the world. For the welfare of the world, there is an incarnation of such a great human being. Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj, the supreme friend of Swamiji, gives evidence from the above words of Swamiji's devotion practices of yoga and as a 'possessor of yoga'. Swamiji in the text 'Atmasukhanubhava' repeatedly forewarn self mind - 'O budha!', that is the ignorant mind, two kinds of devotion-worship are inscribed in Vedas and Shastras. The Almighty Lord is expressed in Saguna and Nirguna form that is manifested and unmanifested. Such that the deity form is expressed as Saguna-form i.e. manifested. And the unmanifested form, which is pervading everywhere, is Nirguna-form. This form is discussed in Vedas expressing – “Sarva Khalvidam Brahman”¹ - meaning everywhere Brahma exists. Swamiji reveals for devotion-worship, in the first stage about the Saguna Bhakti. for the live-beings in

general and Mumukshu BhaktiYoga is the first step; herein Swamiji reveals in the same manner as in Vedas. In Saguna Bhakti, the blessings of God is trusted. Swamiji minutely explains every aspect of devotion-worship- Bhakti to the devotees, with great affection. Swamiji regarded only ‘two’ deities prominent . The first is Vishnu and another Shiva. All the sages worship them by chanting and meditation devotedly; this is the opinion of Swamiji.

“शिवस्य हृदये विष्णुः विष्णुस्य हृदये शिवः ॥” (Maharaj, 1961)

The one who is Vishnu; the same is Shiva. And the one who is Shiva; is also Vishnu. That means both of them are not different but one only.

‘ मन ते सकल वासना भागी | केवल राम चरण ली लागी ॥’

(Maharaj R. T., 1966)

Devotion with natural love is expressed. This devotion (Raganuraga Bhakti) is like the boundless flood which takes others too coming in the way, in the stream of Bhakti. Tulasidasji says that virtuously chanting the name of God Rama is enough for getting over the ocean of worldly concerns. There are also two streams of Saguna- Bhakti (virtuous devotion-worship) –

1) Rama Bhakti, 2) Krishna Bhakti.

RamaBhakti/ Vaishnava Tradition

There are also two streams of Saguna- Bhakti (virtuous devotion-worship) - 1) Rama Bhakti, 2) Krishna Bhakti.

Swamiji being of the Vaishnava cult, virtuous devotion-worship of God Rama was established in his heart just like deity in the temple. And so, he conceptualizing the role of Rama and Krishna has advised for virtuous devotion-worship of Lord Vishnu. But still, he used to give special emphasis on devotional service of Rama - RamaBhakti. First the Devotee (Upasaka), should get with due rituals from the Sadguru- Vishnu’s Ashtakshar Mantra- 'Om Namō Narayanay' or Dwadashakshar Mantra- 'Om Namō Bhagvate Vasudevaya' or 'ShriRama' Mantra or ShriKrishna

Ashtakshari Mantra or Shashtakari 'Rama Mantra' or 'Mantradaya' that is any of these Mantras. For the chanting of this mantra, Swamiji is emphasizing for Mantra Diksha from the able Sadguru; from none of the mantras, salvation can not be achieved unless is got from the Sadguru. By appeasing the Sadguru on any pious day (Tithi) and on auspicious moment (Muhurta) the mantra should be got properly explained from him. The Mantras got by the devotee from the Sadguru's utterance, is capable of giving the desired result (Siddhi). The accomplished Mantra is like the 'Kalpvriksha', which gives the desired results instantly. Without the grace of Sadguru, reading of the scriptures and chanting the mantra on his own, does not give the desired results rightly and does not lead to accomplishment.

Rituals of Bhakti (self-conscious Devotion-Worship)

With which method of self-conscious devotion, one should perform has been explained by Swamiji in simple manner, in 'Atmasukhanubhava'. He says that the prudent one should get physically pure by doing all the natural deeds, bath etc., and then sitting on the clean pedestal should perform three due rituals i.e. 'Aachmana' & 'Pranayama' three times. Then firstly meditating the 'Mantra' with pledge, then one should perform heartily the devotional worship (Manas Puja) of Ramaji. The rituals of Manas Puja are expressed interestingly.

Firstly in the lotus-heart the clean milky ocean (Ksheera Sagara) and then in its middle the bright white light candle should be visualized in meditation. Then in that bright light candle a huge verdant garden of 'KalpaVriksha' (tree which fulfils wish), should be visualized in meditation and in this manner mediating on his form, by worship, prayer, anthem one should install beautiful idol of the Lord. Then the aforesaid Ashtakshari or Dwadashakshari Mantra should be chanted as per capacity, with due rituals. Vishnusahasranama Mantra should also be chanted continually. For the attainment of Bhakti, the importance of Upasaka, Upasya, Pujavrat, Puja-Vidhi (rituals), Mantra, Japa (chanting), etc. has been validated. Simultaneously, the devotees of Saguna cult have

given more importance to Pujan, Archana, meditation of Sevyaswaroop (Idol-form of Lord), remembrance of his name, etc. In this manner Swamiji has made known the best methods of Saguna Bhakti, by doing which, all the evils are destroyed and the path to salvation (Kaivalya) is made easier. Having faith, trust steadily and firmly in God, is stated to be the principle of Nirguna Bhakti of God.

Nirguna Bhakti of Swamiji

The perennial like continual stream and extraneous devotion is called Nirguna Bhakti. This (Bhakti) devotion is selfless (without any wish) unique Bhakti (devotion), in which the highest perfectionist and bliss is perceived by the devotee. In Nirguna Bhakti emphasis is given on the self-confidence of the devotee. This (bhakti) devotion aimed towards the Nirguna (without attributes) and Nirakara (without form) For the Nirguna Bhakt (devotee) importance of self-realization by vision of unitary base, has been given. The Nirguna Bhakts (devotees) are the discoverer of truth- eternal element. The Nirguna Bhakts (devotees) willing salvation, try to make this world heaven by their good deeds. In Nirguna Bhakti (devotion) there are two cults- the knowledge-path and the love-path. Swamiji states that perceiving through the mind that Nirguna (without form) God is pervading everywhere is love-path. Because that God is everywhere in the Universe fully. All deeds, actions are happening in the world due to the conscious element of God. In Vedas the form of Nirguna (without form) God is revealed evidently to be- Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. The Maharshi Patanjali has also demonstrated this. For praying God, by indicating the form of God his attributes, characteristics are stated.-

“क्लेशकर्मविपाकाशयैरपरामृष्टः पुरुषविशेष ईश्वरः।”² (Satish, 2019)

Ishwara is a purusha yet universal indweller, untouched by afflictions, action, impression and their results. The persons who has altogether different character and is detached as compared to the common live beings; who are attached with the ignorance etc. five troubles, an auspicious and ominous mixed deeds (karma), caste & life-time, the dues out of destiny and afflictions in the mind, the manifestations arising out of the experience of the deeds (karma) and their results; such conscious person is in the form of God. Whose qualities, deeds, character and form is only the eternal; who is full of consciousness only; and who is full of the qualities - unique, all-powerful, formless, omnipresent, eternal and infinite etc.; whose character is with- eternity, knowledge, bliss, purity, justice, kindness and unborn (Ajanma). Who manages the Generation (Utpatti), Organization (Palanaa), Destruction (Vinash) of all living beings and also gives them the fruit according to their good and bad (Punya and Paap) deeds (karma); is called God. Who is pervading everywhere, is Omnipresent.

“ तत्र निरतिशयं सर्वज्ञबीजम् |” (Satish, Patanjali Yogdarshan

Vyasbhasya evm Bhojvrutti, 2019)

The extraordinary knowledge in all spheres, which is in the past, present, future or in all the time, exists in less somebody or more in others, is called seed (Bija) of Omniscience. In which person this knowledge is without expiration, is not bound by the time or so, he is called Omniscient.

“ पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात् ||” (Satish, Patanjali

Yogdarshanm Vyasbhay evm Bhojvrutti, 2019)

God is Omniscient as he having profound knowledge. And having no self-interest for creation of this Universe, but to be gracious to the live-beings for their amelioration through preaching of knowledge and spirituality, religiousness is only the purpose for creation of the Universe again and again. So having profound knowledge, in the beginning of the Universe, by imparting knowledge, (dharma) spirituality etc. through Vedas, God becomes the first Guru. As in the form of plenipotentiary power, God is called Eternal (Satya). As in the form of consciousness, he is called

Knowledge (Dnyana) and as his form without attributes (Nirguna) in the form of happiness, he is called Bliss (Ananda). In this way, knowing essence that Goddess is Eternal (Satt), Knowledge (Chitt), Bliss (Ananda), worshipping God continually, is duty of every one. This is the teaching (preachment) of Swamiji.

Rituals of worship of God

There is no need of external pomp and show but emotion is required for performing worship (Manas Puja) internally; which is stated by Swamiji. The adoration being performed by the sages, saints who deeply love God, the same is stated by Swamiji to the mind (Mann). Before starting any process of worshipping (Sadhana), deep adoration, emotion, dedication and love towards God in mind are very necessary. Swamiji reveals to the mind, the way and words which should be followed for praying the God. 'O! God, you know all the subjects related to past, future and present has ordained all the paths of the earth, the future and the present. You give the inspiration to all the live-beings. You are the overlord of Illusion (Maya). O' ocean of kindness! You please forgive me for all the evil deeds (Aparadha). I have taken fully surrender to you. Swamiji advises that after performing the worship of God humbly with devotion, adoration and emotion, the chanting (Japa) of Omkara for the (Aradhana) adoration (worship) of the Supreme Lord. Omkara that is Om, which is the name revealed in all the spiritual scripts since eternity. As per the Great-Sages (Maharshi) Patanjali and VedVyasa, Swamiji also preaches for taking refuge of the Guru in the form of God, for praying the Supreme Lord.

“ तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः ||” (Satish, Patanjali yogdarshnm vyasbhasy
evm bhojvrutti, 2019)

The signifying name of God is Sacred (Pranava) that is 'Om.' As having knowledge in abundance, God is omniscient and is the Supreme-Guru of live-beings. For praying him Maharshi has preched.

“ प्रकर्षेन नुयते स्तूयते अनेन इति प्रणवः |”

(Satish, patanjali yogdarshanm vysbhasy evm bhojvrutti, 2019)
According to this etymology, “The word by which praise of God is invoked excellently is called Sacred Om (Pranava). Rigvedi call him as Pranava, Samvedi udgeeth and others okatars. The meaning of Pranava is written by Maharshi Dayanand is-

“ प्रणवः ओंकारः ।”

(Satish, Patanjali yogdarshanm vyasbhasy evm bhojvrutti, 2019)
which means that Pranava is Omkar. The chanting of that omkar occult is the ultimate worship of God. The prudent devotee should chant the Nirvikara Omkara Mantra (occult) by sitting in the lonely place. While chanting, one should also his God’s divine name. While chanting the Omkara, its meaning should also be considered.

“तज्ज्यस्तदर्थभावनम् ।”

(Satish, Patanjali Yogdarshan Vyasbhasya evm Bhojvrutti, 2019)
The chanting (Japa) and remembrance of that Pranava and its meaning should ever be thought by which the mind of devotee (worshiper) is concentrated pleasantly for getting the knowledge in the real form firmly. By which in his heart the divine light of God and devotion to him is enhanced continually. So, for achieving the state of manifestation of God, knowing the form of God and for that accomplishment and emotion for God are necessary. This does not only lead to the state of mental detention; but also enables for attaining the detachment.³

“ओंकार बिंदु संयुक्तं नित्यं ध्यायन्ति योगिनः ।

कामदं मोक्षदं चैव ओंकाराय नमो नमः ॥

(Shankaracharya, 2021)

(Salutation to him) who resides in the spiritual heart center as Omkara, on whom the Yogis constantly meditate, who grants all desires and also liberation to his devotees. Salutation to that Shiva, who is represented by syllable “Om”. In this way, how the chanting should be got understood, is analysed by Swamiji.- By

combination of 'Akara', 'Ukara' 'Makara' and Ardhmatra sounding together Omkara is formed. 'Akara' is in the form of Brahma, 'Ukara' is in the form of Vishnu, 'Makara' is in the form of Shiva and the sound, which is called Ardhmatra, is in the form of the Supreme Lord- God himself. 'Akara' is Prithviloka (Earth world), 'Ukara' is Antariksha (Space world), 'Makara' is the Swarga (Heavenly world) and Ardhmatra sound is the form of God. 'Akara' is the form of Rigveda, 'Ukara' is in the form Yajurveda, 'Makara' is in the form Samveda. The meditation on the meaning of this 'Omkara Mantra' should done lonely in unfathomable, conscious mind and chanting of Omkara Mantra continually, in morning and evening. As somebody gives presence on calling his name, in the same manner by chanting the Omkara Mantra meditating on its meaning, God appears nearby or gives perception of his presence to devotee. The manifestation is according to the afflictive emotion.

Outcome of Devotion

Generally it is the propensity of live-beings to think in advance about the fruit of any deed; before doing any deed , thinking about it in the mind is natural process. So Swamiji states to mind the fruit of Omkara-Upasana (Devotion to the Supreme power) that- Devotee's the distraction , evils and troubles- deposits of many births are destroyed and all the desires are fulfilled soon. Through the devotional worship of God the soul gains the conscious manifestation of God, along with the attainment of self-realization and also becomes possible for getting over the distraction of yoga.⁴ (aarya, 2019) The devotee who worships without any desire or wish for fruit, getting freed from all the bondage of the worldly concerns ultimately, attains the domain (Kaivalyadham) of the Supreme Lord.

ये तावदन्तराया व्याधिप्रभृतयस्ते तावदीश्वरप्रनिधानान् भवन्ति

स्वरूपदर्शनमप्यस्य भवति |

यथैवेश्वरः पुरुषः शुद्धः प्रसन्नः केवलोऽनुपसर्गस्तथायमपि बुद्धेः प्रतिसंवेगी यः

पुरुष इत्येवमधिगच्छति ||

(Satish, Patanjali Yogdarshan Vyasbhasya evm Bhojvrutti, 2019)

These distraction to Yoga, that is the (Adi-Vyadhi), are not occurred (caused) by praying God', that is, they will not come in the way of yoga. The devotee performing this worship, prayer of God, gets the self-realization and also manifestation of the true form of God. As the Divine (Special) person in the form of God, being pure (Shadhu), devoid of the ignorance (Avidya) etc. affliction, and hence he is without attributes (Nirvikara), devoid of sorrows, caste, creed, age and pleasures, in the same way, the live-being (Jivatma) who by conscious mind gets the perception of knowledge, also attains the self-realization.

Swamiji's Directives to Devotees.

***‘While doing the work of the world, chant the name of Rama. Believe the thing received from righteousness and accept his offering. If you want to worship, then throw off your sin first. God will be found by the one who does good work.’⁵**

(Sitaramdasji S. , Shree Gurudev Masik, 1958)

***‘ It is easy to do hymns but it is difficult to digest it .’⁶**

(Sitaramdasji S. , Mann ki Kahani Mann ko sunana, 1965)

***‘भजन करना सहज है परंतु उसको हजम करना कठीण है |**

Listening to the direction of the Guru, devotee (Sadhaka) starts hymns (bhajans), but infatuation, etc out of illusion is attached with him in such a way that even for a moment his mind does not ⁷ get detached from the worldly concerns. And if by the grace of Guru, Hymns (Bhajan) - devotion is performed then

gaining of experience internally starts. The way of spiritualism is very difficult, just like the abayas. So there the devotee may get derailed. Describing amongst people (world) about internal experience perceived, may lead to emergence of a bit pride in devotee. And the devotee becomes zero. So, Swamiji says that it is difficult to digest Hymns, prayers (Bhajan).

***' There should be a great enthusiasm in devotee for service, but what happens, he starts considering- ' Myself is the true servant (Sevaka), due worshiper '. And as such, here is the deception.'**⁸ (Sitaramdasji S. , Mann ki kahani Mann ko sunana, 1964)

***‘साधक को सेवा करने का उत्साह चाहिये परंतु होता क्या है वो अपने को ‘मैं ही सच्चा सेवका अधिकारी’ ऐसा समझ लेता है और यहां ही धोका है |** (Sitaramdasji, Mann ki kahani Mann ko Sunana, 1964)

Swamiji warns the devotees at every moment to moment, makes alert that the path of devotion (Bhakti), is simple and easy. But there are unlimited ways for falling down due to pride. Enthusiasm for worship, devotion is good but pride for the same, destroys all. The great Sages, Devata, Kings, Emperors and Learned ones were fallen down because of this pride. If the period of all these devotion are counted, then we come to know that Swamiji has stated period of 12 years for devotion, which is one Tap. Whatever to be done, it should be done increasing speed steadily If the engine (of train) starts with very high speed, then all the bogies will break. Therefore, the engine first starts slowly and then speed is increased. In the same manner, each and every work should be done. Otherwise, if the work is started with very high speed then after some days it will be stopped. The same applies to devotion also. For a month service is done with high devotional worship and then resulting in illness, the net result will be nil. The same principle is steed by Maharshi Patanjali.-

‘स तु दीर्घकाल नैरन्तर्यसत्कारा सेवितो दृढभूमिः।’⁹

(Satish, patanjali yogdarshanm vyasbhasy evm bbhojvrutti, 2019)
This practice-devotion is continually for the long duration, with reverence, regards and firmness established. For keeping this practice-devotion continually, the main remedy is to gain the discreet knowledge. Then only, for all the living beings, (Param Pita Parmatma) the Supreme Lord and his domain- salvation (amelioration) is possible to be gained.

*** Bathing before sunrise and meditation, devotional worship of the merciful God continually with revered love on a daily basis if performed assuming as duty and with reverently great love, the duty as a duty, then it is sure that you and your family-future heirs will be benefitted by pleasant welfare.** ¹⁰

(Sitaramdasji, Mann ki kahani Mann ko Sunana, 1964)

* रोजाना सूर्योदय के पहले स्नान व सुबह श्याम उस दयालू परमात्मा का ध्यान नित्य नियम से और बड़े प्रेम से कर्तव्य समझकर यदि किया तो तुम्हारा और तुम्हारे भावी पिढी का कल्याण होगा यह निश्चित है।

The first Prahara (BrahmaaMuhurta) of dawn is called ‘Amrit-Vela’. During this period, the righteous frame (SatvikVritti) of mind is on the peak point. The state of the inter-settled conscious mind is concentrated. At this time, the meditation is possible attentively with concentrated mind. Then the waves in mind are also stable. The worldly concerns are not in the mind therefore the process of union of soul (Atma) and the Supreme Lord (Parmatma) becomes easy. If this process is done perpetually (continually) in a daily form, then internal power emerges and gain of the appearance of God in the form of ('Jyoti') Light, starts. In all the religions the entity of God is known in two forms- first is Light- 'Jyoti' and another is Sound- 'Shruti' or ('Nada'). They are existing in the virtuous, self-evident true form of the Supreme

Lord.¹¹ (Maharaj p. B., 2007) By the grace of divine person 'Vibhuti'- (Guru Krupa), Bhaktiyoga is transformed into Rajyoga and the ultimate aim is fulfilled.

Conclusion

Swamiji say's about Ishwarpranidhana , there is no hindrance in spiritual practice by taking refuge in the Lord, because only by the 'Naam' mantra recited by the saints, the living being are saved. Guru should not be considered as to be the body, Guru is not of bones and flesh in the body, but the sound-words is to be considered as Guru. In all the religions the entity of God is known in two forms- first is Light- 'Jyoti' and another is Sound- 'Shruti' or ('Nada'). They are existing in the virtuous, self-evident true form of the Supreme Lord. From the Ruchas (Mahavakya) in the Upanishadas, the Nirakar Brahma and his omnipresence are revealed, in the same manner, the teachings of Swamiji give guidance to the devotees. Swamiji's these most comprehensive maxims are as the Mahaprana, the great remedy (Mahaushadhi) and the 'SanjivaniButi', to the all the devotees. Swamiji has emphasised that by due rituals of Saguna Bhakti and Nirguna Bhakti, devotion one (devotee) can get realization not only about the human-body, its organs, and mind but can also achieve self-realization by the grace of Guru. And the Sakara form of the Supreme Lord (Parmatma) can also be attained.

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