THE HISTORY OF JAME JAMSHED, FUMBLING TO BE REBORN.

TELLER: K. N. DASTOOR

Let us call it J J. **Jam-e-Jamshed** means the Jam-goblet of Shah Jamshid. This has two implications. One is: the Jam of spiritual intoxication- Ishq-e-Hakiki, the Love for the Divine; and the other is: the Jam of the World-Time, in which all the past, present and future can be seen.

One hundred and sixty eight years back, Marzban family of Mumbai, through a flash of divine inspiration, floated a daily, **Jam-e-Jamshed**, for the Parsis- a brilliant venture. The auspicious day was 12th March 1832. Jame Jamshed was born. A historical day indeed for the handful descendants of the lost Iranian empire, then thriving in India.

In those days, the Parsi life was entirely unique. They were in Hindustan for more than a thousand years. They were intensely conscious that they were on this holy land of Rishis and Saints, to preserve and protect their Religious Institutions viz. (1) Sudreh Kushti, (2) Manthra Prayers, (3) Yasna (Kriyakaam), (4) Temples of the Holy Fire, (5) Dokhma, (6) a stringent moral code of Truth, Charity and Repentance (Meher-Patet) loosely called 'good' thoughts, words and deeds), and (7) above all Boonak-Paasbaani-the protection of the Racial Gene. With what tenacity the Parsis were observing these seven Institutions, can be learnt from Anquetil Du Perron's second volume. (1771)

Jame Jamshed was all for these Institutions. It acutely and actively helped the Parsis to make the Institutions an integral part of their day to day life. Being a daily, it did act like a country newspaper, with all the current news and views on politics and social life. But its main function was to remind Parsis constantly about their religious heritage and culture and keep them alive and thundering in the midst of whatever political turmoils around.

THE ATTACK OF GODLESSNESS

As the 19th century was advancing, the western world was fast revolutionizing its thinking. They were in a powerful search of Godless Universe. Descartes (1596-1650) had already expelled all souls and purposes from nature. Newton had already sown the seed of "mechanical" i.e. Godless laws on 28th April 1686 (the day on which he read his paper 'Principia' before the Royal Society of London.) Laplace had already declared in about 1796 to Napolean that "we do not need this hypothesis" - he meant "the hypothesis" of God! "Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm" (as Fritjoff Capra was to call it much later in 1975) i.e. the dismissal of God spell, became rampant. Then arrived Darwin (1859) who banished God from all life on earth.

This athiestic thinking had reached its climax by the end of the 19th century. By that time, the Western study of Avesta, Pahalvi and Parsi civilisation had begun and advanced considerably. The real beginning was from the exertions of Anquetil Du Perron (1771). The study was then actively taken up in European countries and passed through all kinds of scholarly and academic controversies. But all along, that Newtonian-Cartesian- Darwinian Godless paradigm was inherently running through these studies. They were (and are) not religious studies; they were (and are) only historical, geographical and philological studies. What was (and is) their view of Religion? Read what Dr. I. J. S. Taraporewala wrote in 1951:

"Western Scholars today teach us that religions thought has been born in ignorance, and that early religions have been "gropings in the dark. They have called the early religions of Iran and India mere "babblings of infant humanity". In their opinion religion advances and becomes purer and higher with the advancement of material culture and scientific discovery. The truth as regards religious thought is the exact opposite. However wide and deep the material and scientific knowledge of today may be, still in true spiritual knowledge and in the matter of the secret of the self, the majority of our modern teachers are but infants." ("The Divine songs of Zarathushtra" page 6, 1951 & 1993)

This is the truth about the Western studies expressed by one who was very well versed in them. How can Religion be "studied" through a Godless paradigm? (Paradigm means a stern belief.)

Alas! By the end of the 19th century that paradigm struck the Parsi Community. Religion is a matter of physical, mental and spiritual discipline. Any discipline requires exertion, and an exerting frame of mind. And mind is always inherently lazy to practise a discipline. Those for whom Religious practices and tenets were too exerting wanted an excuse to avoid them, the Western paradigms were quite handy. The Community had then a vertical split. Two major factions arose: **the orthodox and the reformist.**

The Orthodox meant (and mean) those who believed in the preservation of the seven spiritual Institutions. The reformist meant (and mean) those who want to escape from them. Ample materials were (and are) available for the latter in the western studies.

At that crucial time, Jame Jamshed stood by the orthodox. There is no exaggeration to state that JJ was mainly responsible for keeping the Parsi public opinion on the track of orthodoxy, which was a thousand -plus years old.

As the 20th century arrived and advanced, the conflict aggravated. But JJ stood firm. It fought many memorable battles against the so called "reformist" wave. JJ used to vibrate with the writings of orthodox Dastoors, scholars, authors, and lay-people. In the beginning of the century the Theosophists were of great help to the orthodox. In those Godless days of the West, Theosophy was the only movement there, which presented the occult side of Religion. It came, in its own way, to the rescue of our Din. Later on arrived Ilm-e-Khshnoom, which presented direct and most effective materials for mystical and spiritual aspects of all our seven Institutions in Zarathushtrian terms. Many truth seeking theosophists like Jehangirji Vimadalal of Mumbai, Manchershah Kekobad of Surat, Jamshed Mehta of Karachi were attracted towards Ilm-e-Khshnoom. Jame Jamshed, in thirties and early forties became almost an organ of Khshnoom. The lion of Ilm-e-Khshnoom, Jehangir chiniwalla, was with JJ and helped it vigorously to combat the unfaithful reformist onslaught. Many leading articles in Jame were written by him and at times dictated on telephone!

All along JJ was thundering against conversion, mixed marriages and mixed Navjotes. It hammered persistently that if we want to preserve our identity and survive, Boonak-pasbani, the preservation of the Mazdayasni Boon - the Racial Gene was vitally necessary. We cannot preserve our spiritual Institutions without preserving the Parsi gene. Sudreh Kushti, Manthra, Atash, Dokhma, Yasna, Meher-Patet have long established vibrationary fields, which would disintegrate if the Racial Gene of the Community was mixed up. (Alas! Has this not happened to day? And are we not scared of extinction?)

The climax of JJ's orthodox policy was its powerful campaign against Vansda Navjote, which were done under the leadership of one F. Bode and B. F. Bharucha. You should see the headlines and cartoons in Jame during 1941-42. In one cartoon Bode and Bharucha was shown washing a donkey and somebody asking Adi Marzban, the Editor of JJ " What are they doing ?" and he replies: "They are trying to convert a donkey to a race horse by washing him with water." (There was a silent looking Hindu cartoonist - Yadhav in Jame, who gave many laughs to its readers.)

But the times were changing. The century entered its 5th decade. The humanity on earth was becoming more and more satanic. One fierce war was already fought; the second was still on. **Then the blackest day in man's known history - 6th August 1945 arrived.** Hiroshima was atom-bombed. Mankind had taken an irreversible diversion. Earth was now not to be the same. The humanity had an irreparable crack.... and so also the Parsi comm and JJ.

The crack in JJ was presumably financial. There is a world wide phenomenon: the rich are mostly irreligious; and the religious are mostly poor. JJ was under pressure. The so called reformist, rich in money, saw the opportunity to turn JJ. By 1945-46 JJ began to talk of "open forum" "We will publish both sides" was the pretence. (Exactly the same thing is happening now, but in more aggravated form because of the foolhardiness of the present owners and immature journalism of the "editor". More about that later.)

It was a nice wishy washy way to give entry to the faithless. There was one shrewd man watching the tamasha. He could foresee that JJ's policy was or would shortly be sold to the faithless. He was none other than Jehangir Chiniwalla. On 7th July 1947, he came out with a weekly " Parsi Avaz ", which he

published every week without a break for 27 years, till the last moment of his life!

The banner headline of the first issue of Parsi Avaz was:

"Dedicated to Ustad Saheb Baheram Shah"

In the first leading article, Jehangirji traced the history of JJ's somersault. The paper which had for more than 100 years served and nourished the faith of the Community was out to destroy it. An orthodox paper was urgently required; and here it was - Parsi Avaz. And it went on from 7-7-1947 to 30-6-1974 a period of 27 years! Jehangirji had died on 13-10-1973. What a grand 'yagna'!

(I had an extremely good fortune to work for Parsi Avaz for about 20 years. What an experience it was!)

Pursuant to its new policy, JJ appointed one Fram Bulsara as joint editor or something like that. He had a good humorous pen, particularly in Gujerati and was instructed to attack orthodoxy in general and Ilm-e-khshnoom in particular. He did well there. He pool-poohed Khshnoom and went to the extent of blaspheming not only our spiritual Institutions but even the Saheb-Delan's, with whom Baheramshah Shroff had a sojourn for about three and a half years. He wrote a book on his travels in Iran wherein also he desecrated the Zarthoshti Saints of Daemavand. Some quotations from Persian poetry were printed in the book. Do you know who gave the poetry lines to him? **Mr. Jehan Daruwalla the ex-editor of Mumbai Samachar!** More about him later.

With a daily newspaper in his hands, Fram Bulsara first became the Petitioner in a Writ Petition in the High Court to have the Bombay Prohibition Act declared ultravires the Constitution of India. He did not succeed. The report of the Judgment appearing in JJ tried to make out as if he had succeeded. It was a journalistic piece comparable to some writings of Jehan Daruwalla in Mumbai Samachar.

Fram Bulsara then tried to stand for Assembly Elections as an independent candidate against Homi Talyarkhan. He used JJ profusely to get at least the Parsi Vote. We in Parsi Avaz had a thundering propaganda against Fram and ultimately he lost the election and after a short time he died. May his Ruvan proceed in peace towards Ahura!

[At that time I was residing in an Agiary in Mumbai, from where I used to write, for Parsi Avaz, against Fram. It was an amazing stroke of destiny that his Kriya-kaam was done in the same Agiary and I was specially assigned the task of reciting the Afringaan ceremony for his Ruvaan for a number of days. I did it in all sincerity and with a sorrowful heart.]

KEKI KATKI

After the death of Fram Bulsara, JJ slowly realised its mistake of wooing the reformists. It started showing the orthodox colour once again. But the pep was lost. It was not the same Jame of Bansda Navjot fame. It became like other newspapers giving more news of the country than of the community - and that too copied from other newspapers. There was only one man to write about Religion and orthodoxy - Kekobad (well known as Keki) Darabji Katki, JJ's sub-editor. He continued to write leading articles on the Religious Institutions.

History of JJ will be left halfway if the late Keki Katki's sincere exertions as its sub-editor are not referred to. In the late thirties when India was immersed in the turmoil of its struggle for independence, Keki was representing as a press man from JJ and therefore from the whole Parsi Community, in all the meetings and sittings of the political leaders. In particular, **Mohammed Ali Jinah used to welcome Keki Katki by saying:** here comes the Parsi Comm. JJ was the Community's voice, and therefore the Community itself, and Katki was its acclaimed representative. (By the way, Keki Katki was my Mamaji - my mother's brother).

After the sad departure of Fram, JJ tried to woo the orthodox, but not in the way it did from 1832 to early 1940's. Katki alone tried to preserve the Parsi character of JJ. One of his famous leading articles - vide Jame of 5th June 1969 - was on "Nirangdin-thi pavitra Banavaielo Gaomez" wherein he drew the

attention of the Parsis on the miracle of the Nirang consecrated through the Nirangdin ceremony, and the wonder-struck report of a London Bacteriologist Dr. Saunders thereon. (This will be published in a future issue of this humble Parsi Pukar)

Katki's leaders were written in a style ringing with sincerity and faith. **His was the only echo of JJ's past glory.** He retired in early eighties after a service of 48 long years, with a few thousand Rupees as Provident Fund! That was JJ's appreciation of a brilliant journalist!

In sixties, JJ's financial crisis was deepening. Nanabhai Beheramji had tried to rescue the situation by a virtual take over. But Jame was never the same. Its policy of orthodoxy was becoming luke warm. **The daily Jame Jamshed closed down.** The Weekly continued. After the retirement of Keki Katki, it was faltering and fumbling, shaking and stumbling, thanks to its new editor Rusi Dhondy, on whom the editorship was thrust upon just by circumstances. He did not and has not any training or experience in journalism. There was nobody to write leading articles on Religious matters. The mess multiplied and now JJ is on sale. Once again it is committing the same mistake of forties and fifties - the mistake of wooing the reformists. This time it may prove fatal. Almost substitution of Jehan Daruwalla for Noshir Dadrawala is a deliberate blow to the Orthodox, and to JJ itself. More about this later.

History goes on repeating itself, because mankind does not learn any lesson from it. Bernard Shaw said.

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LET THE OLD MAN: JAME JAMSHED COME OUT OF THE HOSPITAL AND BE REBORN AS A YOUNG ENERGETIC YOUTH.

THE GLOOMY STORY OF THE PUBLIC MISTAKES OF JAME FROM SEVENTIES ONWARDS.

TELLER: K. N. DASTOOR

I have traced the bare outline of the history of Jame Jamshed from its day of birth (12th March 1832) to the seventies of the 20th century. The remaining till to-day is a gloomy story of lack of editorial wisdom on the one hand and organisational failure on the other, both coupled with the under current of financial exigencies.

But before I give you a glimpse of this tragedy, I have to say something more about Keki Katki. After the establishment of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah became its first President. He had sent a special plane to India to bring three eminent journalists to Pakistan as specially invited reporters to a political celebration. I am not sure whether it was the Republic day or Constitution day or some other important historical day. **Of the three journalists, one was Keki Katki.** Jinnah knew the glory and potentiality of the then Parsi Community and Jame Jamshed, and the journalistic proficiency of Keki Katki. (This was my poor Keki Mamaji, who got a few thousand as provident fund, after such brilliant service of 48 long Years!) By the way, the second journalist to travel in the small plane was another Parsi, Rusi Karanjia. The third one, I don't know.

We go back to the gloomy story of the Parsi public organ JJ.

I used to visit Keki Mamaji often, in Jame office at the old red building in Calicut street, off Ballard Pier. I saw Rusi Dhondi there throwing his weight around as an almost owner and even talking to Keki mama in a rude bossy way. Mamaji and I used to have a silent smile on the immaturity he displayed. Rusi would have been a different person and JJ would have been different newspaper had he learnt journalism at the feet of my Mamaji, like several other journalists, who considered him as their Guru. The utter lack of appreciation and recognition for Keki Katki was the first strong blow JJ inflicted on itself. All that is happening now is the stunning effect of that blow. They could have appointed Katki as the Chief Editor. They could have at least requested him to continue writing after retirement, which, as I personally know, he was prepared to do. But the owners and organisers had no such wisdom. I doubt whether they were aware of this great and glorious daily that JJ was since more than a century.

I assure you, my dear reader, I have tears in my eyes when I write this. My heart is throbbing with intense sorrow, not only for my Keki Mama, but more for JJ and Parsi Comm. Like every other public asset which the Parsis allowed to be frittered away, the fourth estate of journalism was throttled due to ignorance and short sightedness.

I would be turned out of the human domain, if I do not record here that **Jehan Daruwalla was an ardent admirer of Keki Katki.** After Keki Mama's retirement with a pittance provident fund, he was in financial stringency, At that time Jehan had managed to obtain an handsome amount for him from a Trust. My mom, Manekmai, my sister Homai, and brothers, Baheramgor and Homi, and of course Mrs. Keki Katki, (Sakarmai) were all extremely grateful for Jehan's gesture, and we are so till to-day.

After Keki Katki left, the standard of Jame Jamshed deteriorated at an accelerating rate. What was required badly was a judicious blending of business and journalistic acumen. The best course was to find out an editor who could write on the religious issues with a strong orthodox pen. Whatever these "liberals" or libertines may shout about the "changing times" and the alleged "uselessness" of the spiritual institutions of our Din, the majority of the Parsis are orthodox. Look at the crowd that gathers in Agiaries on Muktad days. Look at the increasing demands for Kriyakaam. Look at the 6000 Parsis walking behind a holy Fire at 3 a.m. Look at the present Jafrey furore in the Community. A wise editor could have channelised this existing orthodoxy in the right directions, as was done by JJ itself for 110 years. It was not very difficult to find such an editor. There was Beheram Mistry, Ervad Erach Karkaria, Adi Doctor, Dosabhai Desai, Siavux

Madon. There were good orthodox writers in Navsari and Surat. A search could have been launched. An advertisement could have brought forward a few of then. Even a team of orthodox Gujarati and English writers could have been formed. If not anything, at least one or two pages could have been devoted to orthodox questions and issues. JJ's present love Jehan Daruwalla was providing ample materials for this. He was writing against religious Institutions almost twice a week in Mumbai Samachar. Thumping replies could have been given to the exhibition of his shallow, hollow, depth less and often inconsistent writings. This would have surely increased the circulation of Jame-and restored its past glory. During the glorious editorship of old Marzbans, there was a weekly Kaiser-i-Hind which purported to be "reformist" and therefore provided ample opportunity to Jame to combat it.

One time this humble writer had suggested to Adi Marzban to have a page for Shiah Orthodoxy headed by Vada Mullanji. "Appoint a columnist from Mullanji's camp and see the result", I suggested to Adi. He appreciated the idea, but told me to the effect that the then new management had no drive and no imagination. I could see that he was then a disappointed man. Marzbans were no longer the owners of Jame and Adi was a "paid Editor" as he told me.

Look at the Jame's of the past two decades. Hardly any editorial on Communal and Religious issue will be found. Many events occurred giving ample scope to drive home the orthodoxy. But JJ failed, to the dismay not only of the comm but also of JJ itself.

Several illustrations can be given for this failure. Of course, allowing Mumbai Samachar to write psuedononsenses on religion and not opposing them strongly was the greatest failure. But even in other matters like Election Scheme of Mumbai Parsi Punchayet, Jame was almost silent. In 1985 when the scheme was brought before the Mumbai High Court and heard by Mr. Justice Suresh, the late Beheram Mistry had intervened with the proposal of what is presently (wrongly) named "adult franchise", meaning "one Parsi, one vote" instead of a cumbersome electoral college. No report of the hearings before justice Suresh appeared in JJ. The Hon Judge amended the Scheme by providing a method of reducing the electoral college to 100. Only when the Appeal was filed against justice Suresh's amendments that JJ fluttered a little. The editorial unwisdom was too confused to understand the importance of this serious issue. At one time, the editor Mr. Dhondy showed an inclination to "one Parsi, One Vote", but did not hammer it. An important principle of journalism is that the public memory is short and therefore to train public opinion on an issue, constant hammering is needed. Nothing of the sort in JJ. The editor can hardly write with a journalistic flair. He was always in search of somebody to write something on "Parsi matters"- 4 or 5 pages in a paper of 24 pages Very late, he purported to appoint Noshir Dadrawalla as "associate editor", but the atmosphere of Jame was not conducive to journalistic freedom and Noshir is no longer the associate editor. He is now just a writer in JJ, with apparently a chain bound on his hands.

And then arrives Jehan Daruwala of "No-Dog-in-Dokhma" fame. ("NODID" for short). The good points of NODID as a person and his bad points as a Journalist constitute an interesting case study in psychology. I wont waste my reader's time on that (for the present).

But Jame's new monkey jump of "Pulse of the Parsis Poll- ("POPP" for short), is of larger public interest than NODID. "POPP" has three 'P's. You may decipher it in Anglo Gujerati as "poll ni polam-pole". (In the II world war days BBC & AIR had a programme "Dhol-ki pole" in Hindi and "Dhol-ni-Pole" in Gujerati, to counteract the progaganda machine of Hitler.)

The questions in the Dokhma poll and 'Poll on poll' are dealt with in the last issue of this humble magazine. They do sound dubious. But more fishy one seems to be on the question of 25-6-2000, viz.

"What is your opinion about the Dasturs and Mobeds? Are you satisfied with their knowledge of religion and the spiritual guidance they give?"

Now, now, this sounds a bit tall! "Spiritual guidance"? Do they give? or, are they asked? And if they give, does the answer not confuse the questioner? That aside, I would reframe the question:

"What is your opinion about the rituals-performing Mobeds on the one hand and Shawl wearing Dastoors

on the other? Are you satisfied with their knowledge of religion, if any and spiritual guidance that they give, if at all? (Please reply separately for Mobeds and Dastoors)"

I would have then suggested to take the question to Jehan Daruwala (Jame's new love). He would have scratched a big No with a screech- judging from his attacks in his old divorced love, Mumbai samachar on the Dastoors and Mobeds. But that NODID apart, I am very much doubtful on the result, which said 81% "satisfied" and 17% "not satisfied". (Jame 9-7-2000). One reason is my own experience of Behdins. "When we know that Mobeds are not performing the ceremonies truly, properly and sincerely, should we waste our money? Is it not better to give the money to charity?" I have faced this complex question numerous times. And as to shawl- Dastoors, the Parsis, whether orthodox or other wise, are thoroughly disappointed. For instance, Ex-Dastoor Kotwal called all Juddin marriages, whether by Parsi males or females, adultery and said they ceased to be Parsis and then affirmed "by majority" the late Nevil Wadia's Navjote. (Please note, I am not here on the right or wrong of the Navjote. I am pointing out the grand inconsistency of the spiritual guidance providers-vide Jame's question).

Another instance is: Dastoor Jamaspasa saying yes to a Navar of a 21 years old Parsi 'boy' from North America, and Dastoor Kotwal saying no to it! The alleged Navar was done, and that boy does not have even Sarosh Baj, Geh and two basic Niyaish's by heart much less the Preamble and even a single Haa of Yazashney! And performing mobeds? 20 minutes Afringaan and 20 minutes Farokshi! Vendidad by an office worker "mobed" between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m with yells and yawns, so long as the Behdin is present!

But again leave that aside. I see some indications that **the Poll result on the question was exactly opposite.** Somebody is reported to have said this to a few persons jointly. Is this correct, Rusibhai? I wish and hope that it is not; not because Dastoors are involved but Jame's integrity is at stake. Better if Mr. Dhondy clarifies. In any case, this poll business has very often proved false. It does not lead to any fruitful result. It is a futile exercise. It does not provide any food for serious thought. Its predictions have very often failed in political matters. It is an undemocratic procedure. Not all Parsis take part in it. The intelligent youths and the active middle aged, and the mature old are not interested. It is idle, impractical ineffective, useless. It has no element of even a sport or game. And Jame's poll questions are often devoid of any intellectual depth.

As I write this, I observe that Jame not only has ceased to be orthodox but is gradually ceasing to be a Parsi paper. For instance look at its Diwali issue. The old feet are faltering, his tongue is stammering, his brain is loosing its cells at a visible acceleration. He is talking more of the past than the present and the future. But he can be revived, energised and vitalised, if treated properly, wisely and with able business acumen. The present attempts are making him more infirm. With Noshir Dadrawala writing with a chain on his wrist and Jehan Daruwala talking of past glories and trying hard to write so as not to antagonise the orthodox, and to add to that, with the entry of international Parsi politics, the old man is already in hospital. It is my sincere hope that he does not go to intensive care unit but gets out of the hospital reborn as a wise young man. Amen! (This is not at all impossible).

Symptoms of degeneration of business acumen become visible in the policy-actions reflected in the current issues of JJ, For instance, the announcements of the lectures under the auspices of the famous Zarathoshti Brothers Fund are published as charged advertisements. The policy makers forget that taking such announcements free would generate a lot of good will which can be financially more helpful in the long run. In Marzaban times, announcement of Parsi functions, meetings, lectures etc., were taken free, not only from Bombay but from all the Parsi pockets in India.

Announcement apart, even the news of vital interest to the community are avoided if the persons involved have criticised the public actions of Jame as a Parsi paper. For instance, the news regarding Surat Dokhma land published on page 12 of this humble Parsi Pukar was deliberately not published though sent, since I, your humble servant, had appeared as Advocate for the Appellants in the Appeal before the Gujerat Revenue Tribunal. Why so? Because my colleagues and I had severely critisised JJ's Dokhma Pole with the alleged conclusion that Parsis want alternate system! Was the defeat of Surat Parsi Punchayet in trying to sell away 57803 sq. yards of Dokhma land not an important news to be informed to the Community? What childish journalism is this?

I apologise abjectly to my readers of Parsi Pukar for having used some of our pages on JJ. But rest assured, it is necessary. They must feel that somebody is observing them intently and critically. **The effects are already visible.** I will be very choosy in writing on such Parsi politics. It will not be frequent, I assure you.

So, let us go back, my dear readers, to our journey in the divine regions of our Din.

Oh God! My love!

When I became a lover
I thought I would secure the pearl
That was my aim.
I did not know how immense
The waves of ocean were

- Hafiz

* * * * *

Dadu writes in pain He is separated from you He sobs for his Lord— Pray meet your devotee.

- Dadu Dayal

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