

## Inclusive Growth and Transformation of Women Labour Market: A Study of Rural Labour Market in Uttar Pradesh

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### INTRODUCTION

The growth process in a dominantly agricultural and backward economy like that of UP should be equitable and inclusive. There is no alternative to this vision whatever may be the growth model. But our findings reveal something else. The growth process in UP has proved to be detrimental to the cause of equitable and inclusive labour market for women and the acceleration in the growth rate in recent years has done more damage. Females still constitute a very small part of the labour force as well as worker population in the rural labour market and even this proportion has witnessed decline over the period. On the ground of WPR and LFPR, it can be concluded safely that there has been severe discrimination against women in the rural labour market in Uttar Pradesh. Social Exclusion (SE) is concerned with inequality the roots of which lie in inequalities of power and wealth. In contrast to static and descriptive terms such as 'poverty', SE places the emphasis on dynamic processes that prevent many from being fully included in society. Social Exclusion is multidimensional- encompassing social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and operating at different social levels; dynamic-impacting in different ways to differing degrees at different social levels over time; and relational.

An Attempt has been made in this paper to present an overview about *"Inclusive Growth and Transformation of Women Labour Market: A Study of Rural Labour Market in Uttar Pradesh"*. The paper is divided into Four Sections. Section First Covers a brief Introduction about the theme. Section second deals with Research Methodology & Review of

Literature. Section third has been devoted to examine the situation of Inclusive Growth and Women Participation in Labour Market. The Paper concludes with section four which gives some suggestions for better transformation of women's labour market with Inclusive growth. On the one hand, a relational perspective focuses on exclusion as the rupture of relationships between a group of people and the wider society. From this perspective, social exclusion is typically understood as a 'state' of multiple disadvantages experienced by particular population groups existing outside the 'mainstream' of society unable to participate and without rights.

Alternatively, a relational perspective highlights exclusionary processes embedded in unequal power relationships operating at many levels and producing a continuum within and between societies characterized by unequal conditions of inclusion and exclusion rather than a dichotomy of included and excluded people. The Moral Underclass Discourse emphasizes the moral and cultural causes of poverty and focuses on the deficits of the disadvantaged. It often focuses on problem groups and emphasizes the importance of social inclusion for social order. Participation in employment has received considerable attention within the social exclusion literature. Long-term unemployment has been recognized as an important cause of social exclusion and labour market exclusion generally has been identified as a dimension of social exclusion in itself. The UNDP has defined exclusion as the interconnection and presence of employment deprivation (unemployment and non-participation in the labour market), and economic deprivation (poverty) and socio-cultural deprivation (social isolation) As seen

above, the gaining of employment is also the primary mechanism for achieving social inclusion under Levitas' Social Integration Discourse. However, some researchers have also highlighted the need to also consider the exclusionary potential of certain types of low-paid or low-quality work.

## Research Methodology & Review of Literature

Gender wage discrimination has been a harsh and bitter reality in developing as well as developed countries. Wage difference on gender basis has been a great global concern for long. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value has gained wide acceptance in modern times and is reflected in several ILO conventions. Several measures have been taken by both developing and developed countries to ensure gender wage parity. Yet, gender gaps in earning remain among the most persistent forms of inequality in the labour market. Gender wage gaps exist and are a reality in virtually every economy, though the degree varies across countries. The present study is an attempt to examine the present status of this ignominious practice. An attempt will also be made to find out equitable and inclusive labour market outcomes, if any, generated by the economic growth process. The study is based mainly on secondary data on employment, wages and organizational structure of labour market and will confine itself to the rural labour market only. However, some primary data on agricultural wages were also collected through interviewing 160 respondents from 6 villages of Kaushambi district and 2 villages of Basti district in Uttar Pradesh in order to get first-hand experience of the current trend. The respondents included 10 farmers/employers and 10 labourers from each village. The survey was conducted during the month of September, 2013.

The presence of gender discrimination in labour markets has attracted the attention of economists for several reasons. Non-discriminatory treatment of workers of different sexes, races, or religions can be regarded as a worthy social goal in itself. The elimination of discrimination can also improve both efficiency and growth. Any effort to alter these circumstances has to aim at addressing gender inequalities from a multi-dimensional

perspective which accounts for changing perceptions and notions regarding women's role and contribution among different agents of the labour markets, in addition to economic growth and enhancement of women's employment. In India, while minimum wage differs across states and industries, in order to bring some uniformity to the minimum wage structure, the National Floor Level Minimum Wage (NFLMW) was introduced in the early nineties by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The NFLMW is non-statutory. It can be thought of as a floor for minimum wages across the country, in the sense that all states are encouraged to ensure that their minimum wages are set above this level. The NFLMW is frequently revised in order to account for rising price levels. Not only is the disparity between men and women important, but more important is the fact that women get paid wages that are lower than the NFLMW even though they work as regular wage workers.

Parthasarathy (1996) found that female real wages in major 14 Indian states formed only 64 percent of male wages in 1964-65. There has been a rise in the share in 1974-75, 1977-78, 1983 and 1987-88 as compared to 1964-65. But the variation between male and female wages still existed. The major reason for discrimination of females is traditional bias against female workers. Jeemol Unni (1997) found that the male-female wage differentials had declined steadily to fall to 1.3 in 1987-88 from 1.7 in 1965. After 1996, however the differential stagnated in most states, and even rose in few others. Preet Rustagi (2005) has found weak potential of economic growth and increasing women's economic participation towards eliminating gender inequalities in incomes and wages, unless supported by concerted efforts at altering attitudes towards women's roles and contribution that are harboured by different agents within the labour markets.

E. Krishna Rao (2012), by analyzing the rural labour market in two south Indian villages, has concluded that women's labour is vital for agricultural operations. He has found that the women's proportion is larger than that of men in all the crops cultivated in the selected villages. But women workers are being paid lower wages than men. Moreover, there is clear discrimination against them in the labour market.

Esther Duflo (2012) has found that women's empowerment and economic development are closely interrelated. While development itself will bring about women's empowerment, empowering women will bring about changes in decision making, which will have a direct impact on development. Contrary to what is claimed by some of the more optimistic policymakers, it is, however, not clear that a one-time impulsion of women's rights will spark a virtuous circle, with women's empowerment and development mutually reinforcing each other and women eventually being equal partners in richer societies. Neither economic development nor women's empowerment is the magic bullet it is sometimes made out to be. Duflo reviews the literature on both sides of the empowerment-development nexus, and argues that the interrelationships are probably too weak to be self-sustaining, and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Using the data from the NSSO's 66<sup>th</sup> round (2009-10) on Employment and Unemployment and examining gender wage inequality for the regular wage workers in India, Shantanu Khanna (2012) finds evidence of the "sticky-floor-phenomenon", where gender wage gaps are higher at the bottom end of the distribution, and fall to smaller levels at the top. The evidence of a sticky floor implies that women at the lower end of the overall wage distribution experience larger wage gaps compared to women at the upper end. Larger shares of these low wage earners do not even enjoy minimum wages required to sustain a decent standard of living. In order to design suitable policies to combat gender discrimination, the author argues that it is instructive to know the distribution of gender discrimination over the wage distribution. Since gender gaps are higher at the lower end of the distribution in India, the impact on equity and poverty reduction by correcting these disparities is potentially substantial. Naila Kabeer and Luisa Natali (2013) have concluded that there is no guarantee that growth on its own will address critical dimensions of gender equality. They suggest that either growth strategies would need to be reformulated to be more inclusive in their impacts or redistributive measures would need to be put in place to ensure that men and women benefit more equally from growth.

Shayan Javeed and Anupam Manuhaar (2013) observe that though gender disparity and

wage discrimination is found across the whole India both in rural as well as urban areas, rural areas tend to have more disparity than urban areas. The main reason for this is the lack of knowledge, awareness and illiteracy among the rural women, suggest the authors. In urban areas, women are getting education and thus are becoming more and more aware of their rights. Hence, the disparity has somehow shown a declining trend in urban areas. But the rural women are still illiterate and they have no idea regarding the schemes launched by government for their welfare. Further, being illiterate and thus unskilled, they are not able to get skillful jobs and are confined to low skilled jobs, which further increase disparity in rural areas.

### Inclusive Growth and Women's Participation in Labour Market

Several analysts suggest that there is a U-shaped relationship between economic growth and female labour force participation. Women's labour force participation rates are relatively higher in low-income agricultural economies. But as economic growth accelerates, participation of women declines up to a certain level before rising again. The present study finds that the rural labour market conforms to the left half part of the 'U'. This conformity is more aggressive in the case of women labourers. Table-1 presents Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of rural labour market in Uttar Pradesh along with Average Annual Growth Rates of NSDP at factor cost at constant prices. Table-1 reveals some very disturbing facts. The females' WPR has been abysmally low in comparison to the WPR of males. Moreover, it has declined over the period. The WPR for females, which was 13.0 percent in 1993-94 in rural UP, declined to 8.7 percent in 2011-12 (68<sup>th</sup> Round). The gender gap<sup>wpr</sup>, the difference between the WPR for males and females, was huge at 37.6 percent in 1993-94. It reflects severe gender discrimination. This gap increased marginally to 38.7 percent in 2011-12. Similarly, LFPR has also been quite low for the females. It was 13.1 percent in 1993-94 and declined to 8.8 percent in 2011-12. Here again, the gender gap<sup>lfpr</sup>, the difference between the LFPR for

males and females, was huge at 38.1 percent in 1993-94. The gap increased marginally to 39.5 percent in 2011-12. A very strange outcome visible from Table-1 is that both WPR and LFPR of women have witnessed drastic decline in 2007-08 (64<sup>th</sup> Round). This may be due to the implementation of the MNREGS in 2006-07. Mechanization of agriculture may be another reason. Mechanized agricultural implements and tools like harvesters, tractors, more efficient threshers, levellers, etc. are increasingly being used now in agricultural activities, displacing some labour from agriculture. However, the ratios for men did not witness such decline.

Since, the rural economy of UP is dominantly an agrarian economy, it can not be assumed that the decline in WPR and LFPR is due to migration of rural women to better jobs in sectors other than agriculture. One possible avenue is the MNREGS. But again, the participation of women in MNREGS in UP is abysmally low (20 percent in 2012-13) in total person-days. However, as Table-2 shows, there has been some increase in women's participation in MNREGS. The proportion of women in total person-days, which was 17 percent in 2006-07, has increased to 20 percent in 2012-13.

Table - 1

Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) : Uttar Pradesh (Rural) (Usual Principal Status: Percent)								
NSSO Rounds	WPR			LFPR			Economic Growth Rate#	
	Male	Female	Gender Gap <sup>WPR</sup>	Male	Female	Gender Gap <sup>LFPR</sup>	Period	AARG\$
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
50th (1993-94)	50.6	13.0	37.6	51.2	13.1	38.1	1981-82 To 1993-94	4.17
55th (1999-00)	46.9	12.2	34.7	47.5	12.3	35.2	1994-95 To 1999-00	4.36
61st (2004-05)	47.7	12.3	35.4	48.3	12.4	35.9	2000-01 To 2004-05	3.48
64th (2007-08)	47.8	9.6	38.2	48.5	9.7	38.8	2005-06 To 2011-12	6.84
66th (2009-10)	48.1	9.0	39.1	48.9	9.1	39.8		
68th (2011-12)	47.4	8.7	38.7	48.3	8.8	39.5		
Source (Basic Data): NSSO, Various Rounds, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, GOI.								

Thus, we find that females constitute a very small part of the labour force as well as worker population in the rural labour market and even this proportion has witnessed severe decline over the period. The WPR and LFPR of women witnessed drastic decline in 2007-08 (64<sup>th</sup> Round), which may be due to the implementation of the MNREGS in 2006-07 and increased use of mechanized tools and implements

in agriculture. Thus, on the ground of WPR and LFPR, it can be concluded safely that there has been severe discrimination against women in the rural labour market in Uttar Pradesh. As seen from Table-1, the AARG of the economy has improved during the period 2005-06 to 2011-12. But the gender gap in respect of both WPR and LFPR has increased. However, WPR and LFPR of men have also declined.

Therefore, increase in gender gap has not been caused by any increase in WPR and LFPR of men. It implies that both men and women have migrated to some other jobs. MNREGS may be one of them.

Moreover, improved economic performance of the economy in recent years has led to absorption of particularly male labourers in some better paid jobs.

Table 2

Participation of Women in MNREGS: Select States								
Sr.No.	State	Women Persondays as % in Total Persondays						
		2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
1	Bihar	17	28	30	30	28	29	31
2	Kerala	66	71	85	88	90	93	93
3	MP	43	42	43	44	44	43	42
4	Rajasthan	67	69	67	67	68	69	69
5	Tamil Nadu	81	82	80	83	83	74	74
6	<b>Uttar pradesh</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>
7	All India	40	43	48	48	48	47	51
<b>Gap-1#</b>		<b>64</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Gap-2*</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
Source: MNREGA Sameeksha: An Anthology of Research Studies on the MNREGA, 2005 and <a href="http://www.mnrega.nic.in">http://www.mnrega.nic.in</a>								
# Gap between the state with highest participation of women and UP								
* Gap between India and UP								

Thus, on the whole, it appears that the improved performance of the economy has discouraged women's participation in rural labour market. Thus, the rural labour market in UP conforms to the left half part of the 'U'. This conformity is more aggressive in the case of women labourers. Whether this is a favorable outcome for the female labour force will depend on the avenues where the migrated labour force has been absorbed. The segment of the women labour force withdrawn from agriculture and related activities which has been absorbed by the MNREGS is getting higher wages. To that extent, the outcome of the growth process is positive. Compared to the proliferation of studies exploring the impact of gender inequality on economic growth, there appears to be less interest in the reverse relationship. This may reflect the lesser theoretical interest in the intrinsic arguments for gender equality on the part of mainstream economists so that there are no well-established models for the estimation of gender equality as there are for growth. In addition, given the multi-

dimensional nature of gender inequality, there are no clear-cut theoretical guidelines as to which aspects should be given priority. However, there exist some strands of arguments dealing with implications of economic growth for gender equality. The mainstream development literature appears to be largely dominated by a positive view of this relationship. One version of this is the view that gender inequality is linked to scarcity of material resources in a society so that women are placed at the back of the queue whether it is for food, healthcare, education or jobs, when these are in short supply, particularly if women's economic contributions are seen to be less than those of men. Growth will ease these constraints on households, 'reducing the grip of poverty', making it less necessary for households to discriminate against their female members. In addition, Becker's theory that labour market discrimination is costly to maintain in the face of competitive market forces suggests that growth strategies that open economies up to global market forces will lead to a reduction of

gender discrimination in employment and a closing of the gender gap in wages. Women's increased productivity will then make it worthwhile for households to invest more resources in female members. A third route is through the likely impact of growth on women's bargaining power. Economic development will expand women's work opportunities in the wider economy while labour saving technologies will enable them to reduce their time in unpaid domestic and agricultural activities and to take up these expanded market opportunities. Increased access to jobs by women will increase their bargaining power at home and in the economy, leading to a diminution of gender inequality on various fronts.

Counter-arguments to this derive dependency theory and various strands of the feminist literature and suggest that economic growth will have little or no impact on gender inequality and may, under certain circumstances, exacerbate it. First of all, there is no guarantee that economic growth will have any impact on gender inequality because the forces that create inequalities of wealth and opulence in a society embody quite different social norms and material practices to those which create inequalities of gender. Certain conditions have to be in place if economic growth is to constitute a strong enough force, or provide the preconditions necessary, to overcome the historically entrenched patriarchal structures which give rise to these inequalities of gender. Growth which generates

forms of employment which largely favour male workers, as in many of the oil economies of the Middle East, has served to buttress existing ideologies of the male breadwinner, leaving pre-existing gender inequalities largely intact. It is, therefore, important to distinguish between different patterns of growth rather than assuming all growth to have uniform impacts on gender equality. It is evident that there is less convergence in the findings of different studies with regard to the impact of economic growth on gender inequality than there was with regard to the impact of gender equality on growth. The impact of growth appears to vary considerably across different economic contexts as well as different measures of gender inequality. The average wage/ salary earnings per day for the persons aged 15 - 59 years engaged in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh have been presented in Table-3. It is evident from Table-3 that male wage rate in regular wage/ salaried employment has grown by 142.25 percent over the period 2004-05 to 2011-12 whereas the female wage rate in regular wage/ salaried employment has grown by 71.0 percent over the same period, which is just half of the growth rate witnessed in the case of male workers. This is an example of substantial gender discrimination. The gap in growth rates of male and female casual labourers over the same period has not been that much large. Thus, employers have discriminated vehemently against women while increasing wages.

Table 3

Average Wage/ Salary Earnings per day for the age 15 - 59 years# in Rural Areas: Uttar Pradesh (Rupees)										
NSSO Round	Regular Wage/Salaried Employees					Casual Labourers engaged in Works other than Public Works				
	Male	% Increase Over Previous Round	Female	% Increase Over Previous Round	Female Wage as % of Male Wage	Male	% Increase Over Previous Round	Female	% Increase Over Previous Round	Female Wage as % of Male Wage
1	2		3	4	5	6		7	8	9
55th (1999-00)	NA		NA		NA	43.50		30.08		69.15
61st (2004-05)	122.40		100.16		81.83	53.37		39.54		74.09
64th (2007-08)	160.50	31.13	129.06	28.85	80.41	73.46	37.64	58.26	47.34	79.31
66th (2009-10)	235.60	46.79	148.11	14.76	62.87	97.04	32.10	69.21	18.80	71.32
68th (2011-12)	296.51	25.85	171.27	15.64	57.76	136.84	41.01	95.31	37.71	69.65
Growth in 2011-12 Over 2004-05	142.25		71.00			156.40		141.05		
<b>Source:</b> NSSO, Various Rounds, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, GOI.										
<b>Source:</b> Labour Bureau, RLE Reports on wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Households, 2009-10, Shimla										
# For 1999-00, it is for the age 5 years and above										

The gender gap in wage rates of males and females engaged in regular wage/salaried employment has increased continuously. The wage rate of women, which was 81.83 percent of the wage rate of the men in 2004-05, declined to 57.76 percent in 2011-12. The wage rate of women as percent of the wage rate of men witnessed drastic decline (from 80.41 percent in 2007-08 to 62.87 percent in 2009-10) in 2009-10 (66<sup>th</sup> Round). This is pathetic and this should be absolutely unacceptable to any civilized society.

In this context, the economic growth process has caused severe damage to the cause of gender equality in inclusion. The gender gap in the case of casual labourers has been less pathetic. The wage rate of women, which was 74.09 percent of the wage rate of the men in 2004-05, declined marginally to 69.65 percent in 2011-12. Thus, the discrimination in the case of women engaged in regular wage/salaried employment has been more pronounced.

Table 4

Average Wage per day for Casual Labourers in Selected Villages (In Rupees)					
Village	Block	District	Wage Rate		Females' Wage as % of Males' Wage
			Males	Females	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Kadirpur Newada	Newada	Kaushambi	150.00	100.00	66.67
Chirari	Newada	Kaushambi	150.00	100.00	66.67
Mohaddinpur Bela	Sirathu	Kaushambi	150.00	80.00	53.33
Fatehpur Bela	Sirathu	Kaushambi	150.00	80.00	53.33
Mohanpur	Sirathu	Kaushambi	150.00	75.00	50.00
Tengai	Sirathu	kaushambi	120.00	65.00	54.17
Parsa Tundi	Basti Sadar	Basti	175.00	120.00	68.57
Chamrauha Siyarapar	Basti Sadar	Basti	200.00	100.00	50.00
<b>Source:</b> Field Survey					

The findings of the field survey on average daily wage rates of casual labourers in the selected villages have been presented in Table 4. Twenty respondents (10 farmers/employers and 10 labourers) were interviewed from each of the 8 villages. In all, 160 respondents were interviewed. Widespread gender disparity in wages has been confirmed. The wage rate of females as percent of the wage rate of males varies from the low of 50.00 percent in Chamrauha Siyarapar of Basti district to the high of 68.57 percent in Parsa Tundi, again of Basti district. Thus, the findings of the field survey conform to the findings based on the NSSO data. Gender wage discrimination exists and it exists despite all efforts of the Central Government as well as the state government. Thus we may conclude that the acceleration in the growth process in recent period has aggravated the gender gap in terms of increase in wage rates as well as in terms of absolute wage rates themselves and the growth process has caused severe damage to the cause of gender equality in inclusion.

## Conclusion

The growth process in a dominantly agricultural and backward economy like that of UP should be equitable and inclusive. There is no alternative to this vision whatever may be the growth model. But our findings reveal something else. The growth process in UP has proved to be detrimental to the cause of equitable and inclusive labour market for women and the acceleration in the growth rate in recent years has done more damage. Females still constitute a very small part of the labour force as well as worker population in the rural labour market and even this proportion has witnessed decline over the period. On the ground of WPR and LFPR, it can be concluded safely that there has been severe discrimination against women in the rural labour market in Uttar Pradesh. Thus, on the whole, it appears that the improved performance of the economy has discouraged women's participation in rural labour market. Thus, the rural labour market in UP conforms to the left half part of the 'U'. This conformity is more aggressive in the case of women labourers. Whether this is a favourable outcome for the female labour force will depend on the avenues where the migrated labour force has been absorbed. The segment of the women labour force withdrawn from agriculture and related activities which has

been absorbed by the MNREGS is getting higher wages. To that extent, the outcome of the growth process is positive. The picture becomes uglier and more unsavoury when we come to the wage rate being paid to women. The growth rate of the male wage rate in regular wage/ salaried employment over the period 2004-05 to 2011-12 has been slightly more than double of the growth rate witnessed by the female wage rate in regular wage/ salaried employment over the same period. This is an example of substantial gender discrimination. The gap in growth rates of male and female casual labourers over the same period has not been that much large. Thus, employers have discriminated vehemently against women while increasing wages.

The gender gap in wage rates of males and females engaged in regular wage/salaried employment has increased continuously. The wage rate of women, which was 81.83 percent of the wage rate of the men in 2004-05, declined to 57.76 percent in 2011-12. The wage rate of women as percent of the wage rate of men witnessed drastic decline (from 80.41 percent in 2007-08 to 62.87 percent in 2009-10) in 2009-10 (66<sup>th</sup> Round). This is pathetic and this should be absolutely unacceptable to any civilized society. In this context, the economic growth process has caused severe damage to the cause of gender equality in inclusion. The gender gap in the case of casual labourers has been less pathetic. The wage rate of women, which was 74.09 percent of the wage rate of the men in 2004-05, declined marginally to 69.65 percent in 2011-12. Thus, the discrimination in the case of women engaged in regular wage/salaried employment has been more pronounced. Thus we may conclude that the acceleration in the growth process in recent period has aggravated the gender gap in terms of increase in wage rates as well as in terms of absolute wage rates themselves and the growth process has caused severe damage to the cause of gender equality and inclusion in the rural labour market of Uttar Pradesh.

Our experience shows that cultural variables have a significant impact on gender

inequality. Gender inequalities continue, in most regions of the world, to reflect long-standing norms and values that govern relations between men and women in different socio-economic groups. However, the findings of various studies remind us that gender inequalities are not immutable but can be acted on by a variety of forces, including those associated with economic growth. Article 39 of the Indian Constitution envisaged equal pay for work for both men and women. To this end, numerous legislations have been enacted by the Central Government and various state governments. But our findings prove that the legal obligations set by minimum wage legislations are rarely binding for employers. Absence of strong minimum wage legislations and lacklustre implementation of the existing legislations means that wage gaps can be larger at the bottom end of the distribution. Stronger enforcement of equal pay and equal opportunity legislation will reduce discriminatory pay and employment practices. In this reference we can say that if government really want to chase the target of inclusive growth, government have to formulate better policy for development of Women Labourer in India.

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