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**Logos of South Asian Countries:  
A Visual Aesthetic and Symbolic Significance**

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**Abstract**

A national logo is a visual representation of a country, and it signifies the most powerful visual language of any country in the world. All the countries have their own logo to represent their country in visual form. In the context of each country in South Asia, a national logo is categorized as a national emblem. The national emblems of South Asian countries have different and unique meanings and are made with different cultural, religious, natural, and historical motifs and shapes. The main objective of this paper is to identify the visual aesthetic and symbolic significance of the national emblems of each South Asian country. The visual aesthetic contains elements of composition, color, shapes, and the essential rules of a logo, while the symbolic significance contains the symbolic meaning of each motif used for the entire logo of a South Asian country. This study finds that a country's culture, religion, and history should not be disconnected from the national emblem because the national emblem creates unique values for a country. A national emblem is like a mirror of a country, which represents the appropriate visual symbol of a country. This study is an analytical study based on qualitative method.

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**Keywords:** Logo, National Emblem, South Asia, Visual Aesthetics, Essential Rules, Symbolism.

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**Introduction**

A logo is a graphical and visual representation of a company, service, product, country, or any governmental or nongovernmental organization. The logos of countries are known as national emblems. However, some of the countries' logos are recognized by different names; for example, the national logo of the USA is known as the *Seal*, while the logo of England is known as the *Royal Coat of Arms*.

Now, talking about South Asian countries, South Asia is the southern sub-region of Asia. It includes eight different countries, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, with their own governments. All the countries have their own historical, cultural, religious, and geographic norms and values. From a religious and cultural point of view, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are the main religions of South Asian countries. Thus, this paper finds it interesting to discover the notion of logos of South Asian countries through the study of symbol and visual aesthetics because a national logo of a country is a powerful tool to represent a country's identity (Figure 1).

The national emblem (logo) stays with every house of the country in different forms, such as in the form of citizenship, passports, coins, money, and various other official documents. Most of the time around us is a national symbol like our best friend, which can give us the right moral ethics and discipline towards the nation. Thus, this study talks about the visual aesthetic



and symbolic significance of the national logos of South Asian countries as major issues of the research. The main purpose of choosing this issue is to fill in the gap in the *Logos of South Asian Countries: A Visual Aesthetic and Symbolic significance*. How different logos carry different meanings and represent different societies in a powerful way is the key problem of this research. To find a solution to the problem, this study focuses on analyzing the logos of each South Asian country. The reason is that the visual aesthetic and the symbolism of the emblems of South Asian countries carry a unique meaning because of their different religious, cultural, historical, and geographic identities.

### **Methodology**

This study follows a mix method (combination of qualitative and quantitative research) that is concluded through deep observation and a valuable literature review regarding the research topic *Logos of South Asian Countries: A Visual Aesthetic and Symbolic Significance*. The analytical study instigates detailed observation of all logos of South Asian countries as key primary sources. Another primary source includes interviews with the visual artists and designers of South Asia to understand the graphic elements, motifs, and symbolism of the logos of their countries. The *Essential Rules of Logo* is a major tool for this study to identify and interpret the beauty of visual aesthetics.









**Figure 1:** This picture shows a map of South Asian countries with their names, capital cities, and territories.

### **Symbols and Visual Representation of the Logo**





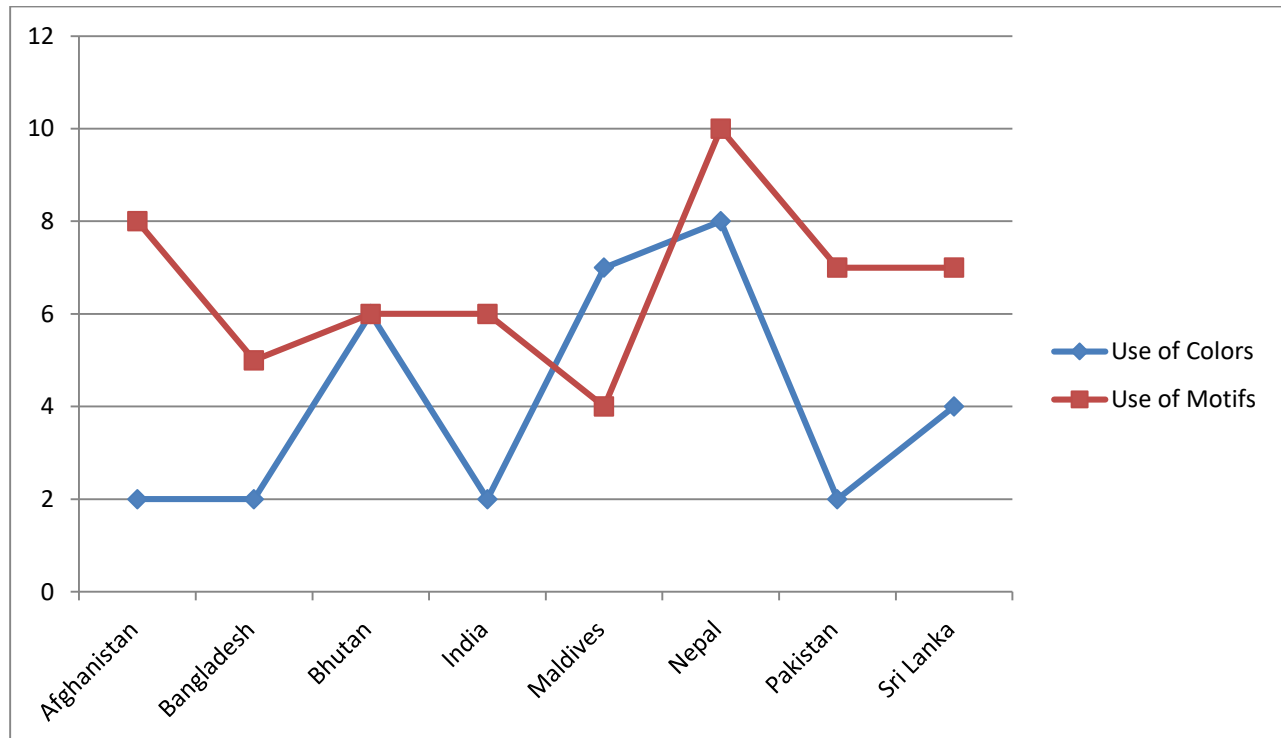
Creating a unique symbol is not an easy task; it requires lots of research and knowledge. A symbol should not have just one meaning. It should represent a meaning of meaning. For example, a photo of a Mac Book Pro can represent the Apple computer company because of technological advances around the world. However, representing Apple through a picture of a Mac Book Pro or the iPhone is not a great symbol, and that cannot be an effective way of representing a logo. The Mac Book Pro and iPhone are just tools. Consequently, an apple symbolizes the advanced technological computer company's logo, not because of their computer company but because of the vision of the Apple Company. An apple symbolizes prosperity and knowledge from a western perspective. Thus, an apple with a bite taken out of it represents a human thirst for knowledge, which is used to communicate the main idea and vision of the Apple computer company. The meaning was already there with the Apple computer company and its various products. However, to represent and communicate it in a more powerful way to the viewers, the meaning is reconstructed with the help of the apple as a symbol.

The composition, shape, and color of a logo also play vital roles in creating a unique symbol. In this context, the visual aesthetics and symbolism in the national emblems of South Asian countries represent strong symbols, or they just represent water, clouds, or flowers, which is briefly described below:

Country	National Emblem	Composition   Colors	Shape	Religious Association	Art   Historical Cultural   Philosophical Association
Afghanistan		Symmetrical. Black, White	Circle & Radiating	Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic Art &amp; Architecture</li> <li>• Islamic Philosophy, Culture, History</li> </ul>
Bangladesh		Symmetrical. Green, White	Circle & Radiating	Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic Belief</li> </ul>
Bhutan		Symmetrical. and Radial Red, Pink, Yellow, Gray, White, Black	Circle & Radial	Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buddhist Art</li> <li>• Buddhist Philosophy</li> </ul>
India		Symmetrical. Black, White	Cylinder	Buddhist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ancient Art of India</li> <li>• Buddhist Philosophy</li> <li>• Indian History</li> </ul>
Maldives		Symmetrical. Green, Red, Yellow, Gray, Brown, Black, White	Circular	Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Islamic Philosophy</li> </ul>
Nepal		Symmetrical. Red, White, Yellow, Green, Blue, Black, Pink, Brown.	Circular	No Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality</li> </ul>



Pakistan		Symmetrical. Green	Circular	Islam	• Islamic Belief
Sri Lanka		Symmetrical. Yellow, Blue, Red, Black	Circular	Buddhist	• Buddhist Philosophy



The above line chart shows the number of colors used on the emblem, and the red line represents the number of motifs used on the emblems of South Asian countries. The main reason to show this line chart is to show how the colors and motifs have been balanced. For example, Nepal has the highest use of motifs and colors among all the emblems of South Asian countries, and Afghanistan has a contrast; there is a gap between colors and motifs. The emblem of Bhutan has the same number of colors and motifs, which creates a balance, which is why it looks eye-pleasing.

### **Essential Rules and the Logos**

Not only are the elements and principles of design highly necessary to create a visually attractive logo, but the "7 essential rules of logo design" also makes logo more powerful and interesting. Here are some points with an example of the logo of the national emblem of South Asia.

#### **1. Timeless**



If an emblem design is timeless, a country does not have to redesign or modify the logo every year or every 10–20 years. For example, Nepal's national emblem had to be revised in 2020 to include the newly issued maps of Kalapani and Lipulekh. A good example of a timeless logo is the National emblem of Bangladesh (Figure 3), where the changeable motifs or elements are not added to the emblem (Further explained in the emblem of Bangladesh). The Logo of Pakistan is also considered to be the most successful and timeless emblem. This kind of logo could be changed only after a rapid change in the government's ideology. For example, the national emblem of Nepal was changed after the rise of the federal republic in 2008.

## **2. Appropriate**

Appropriateness is like the heart of a logo. A logo should depict appropriate motifs, symbols, and design elements that can represent a particular country. For example, an emblem of the Maldives should not include motifs or design elements of the Bhutanese national emblem just to show the objective beauty of the emblem because the ideologies of Bhutan and the Maldives are different. Bhutan is a Buddhist country, and the Maldives is a Muslim country. Similarly, not only in the context of symbolic representation but also in terms of visual aesthetics, a logo should make appropriate use of color and shapes. Nepal's emblem lacks appropriateness in its colors. For example, a white map of Nepal within the logo does not represent the color of Nepal; rather, it represents the emptiness of a country.

## **3. Memorable**

If a logo is unique in its form and content, it could be more memorable. Uniqueness comes from a different use of shape, form, and symbol that communicates a clear message to the viewers. For example, the national emblem of India is appropriated from "Lion Capital of Ashoka" from the 3rd century BCE, which looks unique with its simplified form and is very much appropriate with India's mass culture. It's the perfect example of a memorable logo.

## **4. Legible**

A logo should always be legible and clear. If the emblem is legible, it will be easier to identify. That can be learned through the logo of the United Nations, which conveys clear ideas regarding the vision of the United Nations. There should not be any confusion while looking at the emblem. The national emblems of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are perfect examples of legible emblems in South Asia. All the motifs are clearly designed using a very minimal flat color technique.

## **5. Simple**

Simplicity can always attract viewers towards the logo. The main features of simplicity are the use of very minimal color and fewer motifs in the logo. The logo of Bangladesh is an example of a simple and effective logo among the logos of South Asian countries, while the logo of Nepal is very heavy with so many motifs and colors. A successful logo has no more than 3–4 primary colors. Black and white are not considered the main elements of color in the design. Still, without using any colors, a logo in black and white can be successful. For example, the logos of Afghanistan and India have no particular symbol or representation of color semiotics. Still, they can be considered the most successful logos.

## **6. Originality**

A successful emblem has originality. Originality can create the uniqueness of the logo. For example, India's emblem represents the originality of India's symbol. Bhutan's national



emblem also has its own originality of nationality, which represents Bhutan's art and culture, which makes the emblem of Bhutan more powerful and interesting.

## 7. Versatile

A logo should be versatile, which means it should look great in all sizes and places. For example, some logos look great in large size, but the same logo looks unreadable in small size. For example, an emblem of Bhutan looks great in large size, but it looks a little unreadable in small size. A logo should be functional in all formats, such as horizontal, vertical, horizontal, and landscape. The logos of Bangladesh and Pakistan are versatile in Nature.

## Analysis of the National Emblems of South Asian Countries

All countries in South Asia have followed a certain and unique method of visual representation for their national emblem. For example, the logos of the Maldives and Afghanistan depict the religious symbols associated with Islam, while Sri Lanka and Bhutan depict the religious symbols associated with Buddhism. India depicts the cultural, historical, and philosophical symbols associated with Buddhism; the Maldives, Bangladesh, and Pakistan depict the countries' cultivation symbols and the symbols associated with Islam. The Nepali logo depicts the various symbols associated with the beauty of nature and gender equality. The colors and shapes are different on all the emblems. The detailed analysis of the logo of each South Asian country's national emblem follows as below:

### 1. National Emblem of Afghanistan

The new national emblem of Afghanistan was reformed on August 15, 2021, with the reformation of the new government of the *Taliban* regime. The representational motifs used on the emblem include a Quran, Mihrab, Minbar, sun, two swords, two sheaves of wheat, a cogwheel and the motto of Afghanistan (Figure 2).



Figure 2: National Emblem of Afghanistan

Made in a circular form, the overall composition of the emblem is in symmetrical balance. The form of the motifs plays a vital role as a strong symbol in the emblem, rather than the color. The central motifs, the sun with Quran, Mihrab, and Minbar, represent Islam as the major religion of the country and the country's foremost place for Islam. The sun at the top symbolizes enlightenment. The cogwheel symbolizes the productivity (G. Yazdany, online interview, July 13, 2023). The sheaves of wheat symbolize the country's major cultivation of agriculture. The Arabic inscription meaning "there is none worthy of worship except Allah; Mohammad is the messenger of Allah" is mentioned on the banner, which is wrapped with sheaves of wheat to symbolize faith, discipline towards the belief, and works. The text mentioned on the cogwheel indicates the name of the country: "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". While other inscriptions written between the banner and the cogwheel state the establishment date of a country. The shield is supported and surrounded by two swords, which symbolize power, unity, and protection. The sword, called 'Pulwar' in Afghanistan, represents one of the most historical and cultural symbols in Islamic tradition.

### 2. National Emblem of Bangladesh



The national emblem of Bangladesh was adopted in 1971 after the establishment of a new country separating from Pakistan. The representational motifs used on the emblem include a National flower, Shalpa (water Lily), water, ears of paddy, leaves of jute, and stars (Figure 3).

All the motifs are designed and arranged in a simplified circular form with a symmetrical balance. The emblem is made in only one green color using the flat color technique, which indicates a timeless form of the logo. A thin circular border surrounds the national shield to unite the different symbols and motifs within the emblem. A water lily on water symbolizes the purity, promise, elegance, and majesty of the country. The ears of paddy represent the main agricultural land for rice. Three connected leaves of jute at the top symbolize the major cultivation sector of Bangladesh, as Bangladesh is the second largest producer of jute in the world after India. The two stars on each side of the three jute leaves represent the four founding principles of the country, which symbolize nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism.

### 3. National Emblem of Bhutan

The national emblem of Bhutan has been officially implanted since 2008 (Choadra, 2023). The emblem looks very decorative and attractive, like the pattern of a Persian rug or the Nepali Pauwa Painting. However, the motifs and symbols of the emblem are different. The representational motifs used on the emblem include Vajras, lotuses, diamonds, and male and female dragons. Created in a totally circular form, the emblem is designed in a radial view with symmetrical balance. The emblem is created in mainly red, pink, yellow, and gray, along with white and black. The different shades of two to three of the same color can be seen in the emblem (Figure 4).

Two crossed Vajras are centralized and shown larger than other motifs in the emblem, which represents Vajrayana Buddhism and symbolizes the spiritual and secular traditions of the country. The gray lotus petals that surround the national shield symbolize purity. The wish-fulfilling diamond jewel placed above a lotus represents the sovereign power of the people. The two male and female dragons that surround the crossed Vajras symbolize the purity and loyalty of various ethnic groups. All the motifs and symbols of the emblem are associated with Buddhism. Thus, this emblem represents the country's foremost place for Buddhism. The



Figure 3: National Emblem of Bangladesh



Figure 4: National Emblem of Bhutan



red color on the background of the central national shield signifies the power, glory, and strength of the country.

#### 4. National Emblem of India



Figure 5: Lion Capital, Ashokan Pillar

The national emblem of India was adopted on January 26, 1950 (Figure 6). It is an adaptation of the "Lion Capital of Ashoka" (Figure 5), which was made during the 3rd Century BCE with a 7-foot height on sandstone as the medium of the sculpture, which was created during the time of Ashoka the Great.

According to Gail Maxwell, "the sovereignty of both Ashoka, since the pillar was erected near the capital of his kingdom, and of the truths taught by the Buddha, whose clan, the Shakyas, used the lion as their emblem,"



Figure 6: National Emblem of India  
सत्यमेव जयते

It is a very unique emblem in terms of the design element, which can be directly connected to the art of ancient India, Rome, and Greece. The representational motifs used on the emblem include lions, horses, bulls, and wheels. The three lions are visible, and one is behind the three lions. Each face of a lion faces east, west, north, and south. The wheel (Dharmachakra) symbolizes the Buddha's teaching, moral law, and foremost place for Buddhism. The lion, horse, bull, and bell-shaped lotus are associated with the life of Buddha; they symbolize strength, courage, and confidence. It represents ancient Indian art and religion. "Satyameva Jayate" is written at the bottom, which means "the truth prevails, not thee untrue" (Nair, 2023).

#### 5. National Emblem of Maldives



Figure 7: National Emblem of Maldives

The national emblem of the Maldives was adopted in 1940, and the color of the logo was a little bit modified with a golden crescent and star in 1990 (Figure 7). The motifs used on the emblem include a five-pointed golden star, a coconut palm tree, the national flag, and a banner with the text.

The logo includes five major colors, such as green, red, yellow, grey, and brown, with a very simplified flat color pattern. Composed in a rectangular shape, the motifs of the emblem are symmetrical. Among the five major colors of the emblem, the crescent with the star, with its golden color, symbolizes the pride and value of the nation. The focal point of the emblem is a crescent with a star, which symbolizes faith, discipline, enlightenment, and progress towards Islam because the Maldives is a 100% Muslim country (Riffan, 2023).

Thus, the crescent with a star is a national pride of the Maldives. The palm tree symbolizes the main food source of the country. Not only the coconut, but also every part of the





tree, is extremely valuable for every part of the Maldives. The script on the banner is written in Arabic and says "State of the Mahal Dibiyat". Mahal Dibiyat means kingdom, and Dibiyat means islands." Also, the Emblem has two national flags diagonally shown in the composition, which represent national unity and power.

### **6. National Emblem of Nepal**

The national emblem of Nepal was adopted on May 28, 2008, and was slightly modified in 2020 to include the new maps Kalapani and LipuLekh (Figure 8). The motifs on the emblem include a map of Nepal, the National Flag of Nepal, Mount Everest, green hills, male and female figures, rhododendron flowers, and a banner with the motto of Nepal. Made in a circular, symmetrical composition, the emblem has been made of five major colors, such as red, yellow, green, blue, and pink, along with black and white, to represent the color of the motifs used for the emblem, the direct use of color to represent the motifs loses the value of a strong symbol.



Figure 8: National Emblem of Nepal

A national flag at the top represents Nepal. The emblem depicts the three different atmospheres of the territory, such as mountainous, hilly, and plain regions. The handshake figure of a male and female symbolizes the equality. A floral wreath of the national flower, rhododendron, with two sheaves of rice grains that surrounds the national shield symbolizes prosperity, joy, energy, and healing. An inscription in Sanskrit is written on the banner at the bottom to represent the national motto of Nepal "Mother and Motherland are Greater than Heaven", which means there is no other thing to associate with mother and motherland. Motherlands stand for a country. And country is a metaphor for mother.

### **7. National Emblem of Pakistan**

The present national emblem of Pakistan was adopted in 1954 (Figure 9). The motifs used on the emblem include a crescent, a star, jasmine branches, a cotton plant, a stack of wheat, tea plants, jute plants, and a banner with the motto of Pakistan (Adnan, 2023).

Here the emblem is arranged and designed in a very minimal and unique way. Only green is used to show the association with Islam as a sacred symbol and the Muslim majority; it also symbolizes faith, love, and joy. The composition of the emblem is created with a symmetrical balance. And each part of the motif is symmetrical, which signifies the power of two, unity, harmony, and balance. A crescent with a star is shown at the top as the crown of the emblem, which symbolizes progress and enlightenment. The cotton plant, stack of wheat, tea plant, and jute plant shown as the focal point of the



Figure 9: National Emblem of Pakistan



emblem represent the major crops and cultivation of Pakistan and symbolize the agricultural country's strength and power of agriculture. A floral wreath of jasmine that surrounds the national shield symbolizes cultural heritage, amiability, and modesty. The banner at the bottom is the national motto of Pakistan written in Urdu script: "Faith, Unity, Discipline. This represents the country's strength and a strong association with Islam.

### **8. National Emblem of Sri Lanka**



Figure 10: National Emblem of Sri Lanka

The national emblem of Sri Lanka was adopted in 1972 (Figure 10). The motifs used on the emblem include a Dharmachakra, lion, sword, lotus, and traditional grain vase, sheaves of rice, sun, and moon (C. Atkinson, online interview, July 13, 2023).

The

Dharmachakra is placed at the top as the crown of the emblem. The lion with a sword is shown as a focal point of the emblem, which is connected to or framed by the most important national elements like lotus, traditional grain, and water. The emblem has been in three main colors, such as blue, yellow, and red, along with black and white in very simplified and structured flat colors. Yellow and red symbolize internal beauty, such as the country's strength and power; blue symbolizes nature. Made in a multi-circular form, the motifs in the emblem are arranged and

designed in a formal manner. The Dharmachakra symbolizes the country's foremost place for Buddhism. A golden lion with a sword symbolizes the sovereignty of the country. The traditional grain vase on the bottom that sprouts sheaves of rice grains symbolizes the prosperity of the country. The "Sinhalese heraldic" symbols of the sun and moon flank either side of the traditional grain vase and represent the power, glory, and strength of the country. The emblem is framed by a bold blue border, which represents water because the territory of Sri Lanka is surrounded by the ocean.

### **Conclusion**

The national logo of a country is not only a key jewel but also a symbol of the power and value of the inhabited people of that country. A logo has a unique universal language that communicates the philosophical, religious, and cultural meaning of a country. An emblem represents the country's ideology through the use of strong symbols. The golden rules of the logo, such as timelessness, simplicity, originality, versatility, appropriateness, and legibility, make an emblem more communicative, powerful, and meaningful. The elements and principles of design, such as lines, color, shape, balance, harmony, and unity, make a logo visually attractive.

All the emblems of South Asian countries are made in symmetrical balance, and the use of color in the emblems is different. Some countries, like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, Sri Lanka have used one, two, or three colors; some countries, like the Maldives and Nepal, have used more than seven colors in the logo. The national emblem of Bhutan has six colors, but has minimal use of motifs within the shield creates better value of the emblem. The countries that have used less color in the emblem have a more powerful meaning. India uses a cylinder shape for the emblem, while the other seven countries of South Asia have used a



circular shape for their emblem to show unity and harmony. An effective emblem depicts a country's philosophy, culture, art, and religion, which makes an emblem unique and powerful. If a country's logo does not symbolize their religion, culture, philosophy, or geography in a minimal and simplistic way and lacks visual aesthetics, it can be revised, reformed, or modified by the government. For example, the national emblem of Afghanistan has been revised 15 times since 1901. Similarly, the current national emblem of Nepal was modified in 2020 to include the new map of the country.

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