

Effectiveness of Ishan Uday Scholarship in Case of Gross Enrolment Ratio and Academic Success in North-Eastern States of India

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Abstract

Higher education is pivotal in equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for sustainable economic growth and development. Despite its significance, India faces persistent challenges in achieving an adequate Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), particularly in the North Eastern Region (NER). The GER in India, recorded at 27.1% (AISHE 2019-20), remains considerably lower than that of developed nations. To address this, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has set an ambitious target of increasing the GER to 50% by 2035, emphasizing inclusivity and equity in education. Among the initiatives undertaken, the Government of India introduced the "Ishan Uday" Special Scholarship Scheme in 2014-15, aimed at economically disadvantaged students in the NER. This scheme offers 10,000 annual scholarships to students pursuing general, technical, and professional courses, including medical and paramedical disciplines, with the objective of enhancing GER and promoting academic success. This study analyses the effectiveness of the Ishan Uday Scholarship in improving GER and its influence on academic success and excellence indicators from 2015-16 to 2020-21 by considering 77 numbers of Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries and 80 numbers of no-scholarship beneficiaries. Compound Annual Growth Rates (CAGR), Paired 't' and One-way ANNOVA have been used to interpret the hypotheses. The findings aim to provide empirical insights into the role of targeted financial assistance in addressing regional disparities in higher education access and performance. The findings have proved that the Ishan Uday Scholarship have not been able to effect greatly in case of increasing GER as its objective and academic performance of the scholarship recipients. However, this scholarship scheme has positive effect upon students' motivation towards higher education and academic excellence.

Keywords: NER, Ishan Uday Scholarship, GER, Academic Performance

Introduction

Higher Education is considered as a key to empower human resources with skills, knowledge and awareness to be self-reliant and resourceful and thereby it becomes a determining factor for sound economic development of a country or region. "Education is the single most important factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress... in all branches of national life education becomes the focal point of planned development" (Irissappan and Ramganesht). Access to higher education is measured in terms of the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). GER refers the ratio of persons enrolled in higher education institutions to the total population of the persons in age group of 18 to 23 years. As per UNESCO estimate, at least 20 per cent of GER in higher education is a prerequisite for rapid socio-economic development of country (Chauhan). "For a dynamic and strong nation like India, less than

30% GER in higher education is, too, low to be complacent” ((Rai). Access to higher education has been a longstanding challenge in India. As per the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2019-20, the national average GER of students (aged between 18-23) is 27.1%. “Even after significant growth of the number of higher education institutions in the last three decades, GER of India is far lower than the most developed nations. According to estimates, the US has the highest GER at almost 88.2%, followed by Germany at 70.3%, France at 65.6%, the United Kingdom at 60.6%, Brazil at 51.3%, China at 49.1%, and Indonesia at 36.4%. South Africa (22.4%) and Pakistan (9.4%) are the two countries that trail India in terms of GER” (Rai). The present status of GER has compelled the Government of India to take measures to expand the GER in higher education as the number of students passing from schools has been increasing in recent years (Sikandar, et. al). Increase of GER, particularly in higher education sector becomes the prime objective of the Government of India. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 also aims to ensure inclusive and affordable quality education for all genders, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples (Ahmed et al).

‘The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020’ introduced by the Govt. of India is based on five pillars, viz., Access, Affordability, Accountability, Quality and Equity. It sets a target of increasing the GER in higher education, including vocational education to 50% by 2035.

The problem of lower GER is more acute in the North Eastern Region (NER) of India. North Eastern states, more particularly Assam, Nagaland and Tripura have been experiencing poor GER as compared to the national average. Concentration of higher educational institutions, poor economic background, job opportunity, etc., is some important reasons for lower GER in North Eastern states of India. Provision of scholarship is considered as an important instrument for the economically weaker students to pursue higher education (GOI). Scholarships are not just rewards and recognition for academic success but also offer economic benefits which are appealing to young minds (Rai). For improving the quality of higher education as well as to increase of GER

by encouraging the student community of the age group of 18-23 of the economically weaker sections to pursue higher education, the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the University Grants launched “Ishan Uday” Special Scholarship Scheme for North Eastern Region from the academic session 2014-15. Ishan Uday scholarship scheme targets to grant a total of 10,000 fresh scholarships among NER students of general degree courses, technical and professional courses, including medical and paramedical courses. The effectiveness as well as the successiveness of Ishan Uday scholarship scheme can be judged from the viewpoint of gross enrolment ratio, academic success, etc.

Academic success is defined as “inclusive of academic achievement, attainment of learning objectives, acquisition of desired skills and competencies, satisfaction, persistence, and post-college performance,” (York et al.). Academic achievement is a student’s academic performance and ability which is being measured by a student’s GPA, or grades in a course (York et al.).

The study of the effectiveness of Ishan Uday Scholarship is crucial not only to evaluate the impact on the Gross Enrolment Ratio but also in terms of equal opportunities for higher studies. Further, success of the scheme can be evaluated on the basis of beneficiaries’ academic performances after availing the scholarship. A number of literatures on the basics and awareness about the Ishan Uday Scholarship are available. However, there is a need to study the effectiveness of the scholarship scheme to identify areas for improvement to achieve the intended objectives.

Under this background the paper attempts to analyse the effectiveness of Ishan Uday Scholarship in North Eastern States from the viewpoint of Gross Enrolment Ratio and Academic Success.

Research Objectives

- To analyse and compare the trends between the Gross Enrolment Ratio and the number of students receiving Ishan Uday Scholarship for the six years starting from 2015-16 to 2020-21.
- To assess the impact of the Ishan Uday Scholarship in attaining academic success.
- To study the impact of Ishan Uday Scholarship on academic excellency indicators.

Hypotheses

The study analyses the research objectives on the basis of the following null hypotheses.

- H_{01} : Number of the Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries has a positive impact upon the GER.
- H_{02} : There is no significant difference between the Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries and no scholarship beneficiaries in case of academic performance.

Review of Literature

Rao and Rao highlight the critical role of scholarships in bridging the gap between socioeconomic disparities and educational attainment in India. Their study emphasizes that scholarships serve as a catalyst for enhancing equitable access to higher education, particularly for underrepresented and economically disadvantaged groups, thereby addressing systemic inequalities.

Chowdhury and Ghosh discuss the correlation between scholarship initiatives and the quality of higher education. They posit that targeted scholarships for skill-based and technical education can significantly improve employability outcomes, aligning educational outputs with market demands and enhancing the overall GER in higher education.

Irissappan and Ramganes, views that higher Education in India has made tremendous improvement in case of GER. However, it is still lower as compared many developed nations. High GER is considered as boon for further development of the country. Central and state governments should take efforts to enrol more youth in higher educational institutions to provide skills and training for developing skilled human resources in India. GER should increase in terms of access, equity and excellence.

Patel et al. explore the longitudinal impact of financial aid programs on student retention and completion rates in higher education institutions. They argue that scholarships not only alleviate financial barriers but also foster a sense of institutional belonging, motivating students to excel academically and persist in their educational pursuits.

Sharma and Singh made a critical review between the scholarship schemes prevalent in India the private expenditure of students on higher education.

The study shows that that higher education in India is exclusive in nature, which is accessible by the few. The scholarship in India is also exclusive in nature. To increase the enrolment of students from disadvantaged sections in higher education India should change its scholarship system from means cum merit to means-based scholarship and give preference to those categories that have lower enrolment in higher education.

Rana et al. views scholarship programme as important to the development of students' engagement with higher education. Offering of scholarship contributes to the students' prosperity by providing financial assistance to pursue and complete higher education.

Mukherjee and Das examine regional disparities in higher education access in India, focusing on the role of scholarships in mitigating these differences. They conclude that region-specific scholarship programs, tailored to address localized socioeconomic challenges, can substantially increase enrolment and participation rates in underserved areas.

Nair and Menon emphasize the transformative potential of scholarships in promoting gender parity in higher education. Their research shows that targeted scholarship programs for female students not only increase their participation but also contribute to societal development by empowering women through education.

Sikandar, et al. discussed about the pattern of funding to the Higher Educational Institutions by the state and central governments to realise the goal of improving GER as set by the NEP, 2020. The paper stressed the need of governments' investment to increase the GER.

Ahmed, et al. viewed that the global enrolment of students in higher education should increase by expanding the number of scholarships. Scholarship has a positive impact not only on enrolment but also students' academic performance.

Sharma and Bhattacharya study the psychological impact of scholarships on students, finding that financial aid reduces stress associated with educational expenses, allowing students to focus more on academic excellence. This, in turn, contributes to better learning outcomes and the holistic development of scholars.

Umm et al. states that the students having good financial status may avail effective education from renowned institutions whereas the students from poor background unable to continue and receive higher education from well reputed institutions. In the study, they find that scholarship can create the environment of competition to complete higher educational goals by developing the habit of time management, reading habit, etc.

Kumar et al. provide a comparative analysis of international scholarship models and their applicability to India's context. They highlight best practices from countries with high GER, suggesting that adopting need-based, merit-inclusive scholarship frameworks can enhance India's higher education ecosystem and ensure its alignment with global standards.

Rai said that though India has been experiencing a substantial growth in case of the number of higher educational institutions, however, India is in far lower position in case of GER. Provision of scholarship may be an encouraging initiative for young youths to enrol in higher education by removing the obstacle of poor economic condition.

Anuradha and Raltie mentions about the significance of Scholarship in shaping the educational landscape in a country like India. They view that scholarship enables to obtain and complete education to the students they may not have access to otherwise. This paper studies the effectiveness of scholarship programs on academic performance of the students.

These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted role of scholarships in enhancing GER, promoting academic excellence, and fostering an inclusive higher education system. They also highlight the need for dynamic and equitable scholarship frameworks to address the diverse challenges in India's educational landscape.

Research Methodology

Collection of Data

To meet the first objective, GER data have been collected from the websites of the All-India Survey on Higher Education, Department of Higher Education, Government of India. Data have been collected from the year 2015-16 to 2020-21. Thus, data have

been collected from the inception of Ishan Uday Scholarship Scheme in 2014-15 up to the declaration of New Education Policy, 2020. Data regarding the beneficiaries of Ishan Uday Scholarship have been collected from the web sources like www.scribd.com and www.ugc.gov.in.

To assess the academic performance of the Ishan Uday beneficiaries and effectiveness of the scholarship, primary data have been collected by using random sampling method from the Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries and no scholarship beneficiaries of different colleges of Assam. The Structured questionnaire method has been used to collect data.

Analysis of Data

To analyse the first objective, the Compound Annual Growth Rates (CAGR) have been calculated by using the following methodology.

- Growth rate refers the percentage of increase. Annual Growth Rate (AGR) is calculated as $AGR = (New\ Value - Old\ Value / Old\ Value) \times 100$
- Total Growth Rate = $(New\ Value - Start\ Value / Start\ Value) \times 100$
- Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) = $(V_{final} / V_{begin})^{(1/t)} - 1$ where
- V_{final} = final Value; V_{begin} = Beginning Value; t = time in years

It is assumed that the number of Ishan Uday beneficiaries has a positive impact upon the GER. Thus, GER is assumed to depend upon the number of Ishan Uday beneficiaries. Therefore, Paired t test has been used to test the hypothesis H_{01} .

To get answer of the 2nd objective, i.e., to assess the effectiveness of the Ishan Uday Scholarship on academic success, comparison is made with the academic success of the no scholarship beneficiaries. Accordingly, 77 Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries and 80 no-scholarship beneficiaries of different colleges of the state of Assam at Undergraduate level have been selected for case study. Cross-section data of academic success have been considered. In this assessment, academic success has been considered as outcome variable. Academic success depends on the attainment of learning objectives, acquisition of desired skills and competencies, satisfaction, persistence and post-

college performance (York, et al.). However, due to data limitation, academic success is measured by students' GPA, CGPA or percentage of marks in a given semester. For convenience GPAs have been converted to percentages and thereafter averages of the percentages are taken in to account. Since both the categories of students have been considered from the same population and independent to each other, therefore, One Way ANOVA has been considered to test the hypothesis H_{0_2} .

Significance of the Study

- This study bears its significance on the ground that it will help the policymakers to understand how the scholarship has impacted access to higher education specially for economically disadvantaged students.
- This study will show how this scholarship

- program is effective for attainment of the objectives of NEP, 2020 of Government of India.
- This study will show how the Ishan Uday Scholarship has been able to contribute students' development by improving academic performance, motivation and confidence of students of the North-East states of India.
- It will throw a light about the utilization pattern of scholarship amount for study purpose.

Results and Discussion

Objective-1: Impact of Ishan Uday Scholarship upon the GER of North-Eastern States

Status of Students' selection for Ishan Uday Scholarship in HEI of North Eastern States of India for 6 years commencing from 2015-16 to 2020-21 has been tabulated at Table-1.

Table 1 Number of Students Selected for Ishan Uday Scholarship from 2015-16 to 2020-21

Academic Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura	Total
2015-16	61	6841	161	464	239	81	136	809	8792
2016-17	36	4288	1378	87	160	69	41	177	6236
2017-18	44	6134	1120	70	165	47	14	457	8051
2018-19	94	7255	1081	187	55	301	0	827	9800
2019-20	316	7482	705	183	234	405	156	519	10,000
2020-21	208	7166	2049	101	57	92	124	203	10,000
CAGR%	28	1	66	-26	-25	3	-2	-24	3

Source: *file:///F:/Ishan%20Uday/ISHAN%20UDAY.%20NER.html

<https://www.scribd.com/document/557646748/2042151-Assam-ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21>

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/0869364_Tripura---ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/2607746_Meghalaya--ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/5278559_Manipur---ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/7373542_Mizoram---ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/2975749_Nagaland--ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/6869421_Arunachal-Pradesh--ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/8570123_Sikkim---ISHAN-UDAY-2020-21.pdf

Table-1 shows that altogether the CAGR of the last six years from 2015-16 to 2020-21 of Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries for all the 8 North Eastern States has registered a CAGR of 3.0%. Thus, the overall number of student beneficiaries has increased considerably except the states Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura. The highest growth of CAGR

in case of Ishan Uday beneficiaries is noticed in Manipur as against the negative growth of CAGR of the states Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura.

Gross Enrolment Ratio

The table 2 shows the trend of Gross Enrolment Ratios in North Eastern States of India from 2015-16 to 2020-21.

Table 2 Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education in North-Eastern States

Academic Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura	Total
2015-16	28.7	15.4	34.2	20.8	24.1	14.9	37.6	16.9	192.6
2016-17	28.9	17.2	35.0	23.5	24.5	16.6	37.3	19.1	202.1
2017-18	29.7	18.2	31.8	24.7	22.9	17.8	37.4	21.2	203.7
2018-19	29.7	18.7	33.7	25.8	25.7	18.7	53.9	19.2	225.4
2019-20	35.4	17.3	38.3	26.1	26.1	18.5	75.8	20.2	257.7
2020-21	33.7	17.5	37.8	26.8	26.8	17.3	39.9	19.2	219.0
CAGR%	3	2	1	5	2	3	1	2	3

Source: ** <https://aishe.gov.in/aishe/gotoAisheReport>

Table 2 shows that altogether the CAGR of the last six years from 2015-16 to 2020-21 of GER for all the 8 North Eastern States has registered a CAGR of 3.0%. The CAGR of GER is the highest, i.e. 5% in case of Meghalaya and the lowest in case of Manipur and Sikkim, i.e. 1% each.

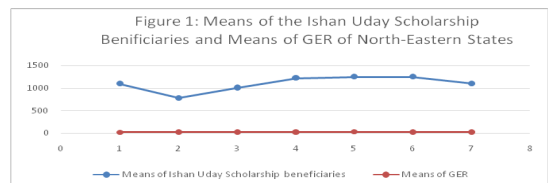
The comparison of the Table-1 and Table-2 reveals the mismatch between the CAGR of Ishan Uday beneficiaries and CAGR of GER. Meghalaya experiences the highest CAGR in case of GER while Manipur and Sikkim experience the lowest CAGR of GER.

On the other hand, in case of number of beneficiaries, the states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura experience negative CAGR. Thus, it implies that no relation exists between the Ishan Uday beneficiaries and GER of North-Eastern States.

Table 3 Shows the Mean Values of the Number of Ishan Uday Beneficiaries and the means of GER of 8 North-Eastern States during the Period from 2015-16 to 2020-21

Year	Means of Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries	Means of GER
2015-16	1099.00	24.07
2016-17	779.50	25.26
2017-18	1006.37	25.46
2018-19	1225.00	28.17
2019-20	1250	32.21
2020-21	1250	27.37
Average	1101.65	27.09

Source: Author's Calculation of respondents' information



On the basis of the data of table-3, paired t-test has been calculated as represented in table-4.

Table 4 Paired Samples 't' test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	0 - 0	1.07456E3	183.71983	75.00330	881.75287	1267.35713	14.327	5	.000

Source: Author's Calculation

The table value of t at 5% level of significance for 5 degrees of freedom is 4.032. Since the calculated t is greater than the tabulated t, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that the Ishan Uday

Scholarship does not have any positive impact upon the GER.

Objective-2: Impact of Ishan Uday Scholarship on Academic Success:

Table-5 represents the average percentages of marks secured by both Ishan Uday beneficiaries and no scholarship beneficiaries at different semesters

university examinations. 77 Ishan Uday Scholarship beneficiaries and 80 no scholarship beneficiaries of different colleges of the state of Assam at Undergraduate level have been considered to measure the level of Academic success.

Table 5 Averages of Percentages of Marks

Source: Field survey questionnaire and Author's calculation

On the basis of the averages of percentage of marks secured at different semester examinations by both the categories of students, the following

descriptive statistics and One Way ANOVA results have been obtained as represented by the Tables 6 and 7 respectively.

Table 6 Descriptives

Scholarship holders' percent								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
52	2	63.00	2.828	2.000	37.59	88.41	61	65
53	1	66.00	.	.	.	.	66	66
54	1	59.00	.	.	.	.	59	59
55	1	67.00	.	.	.	.	67	67
61	1	72.00	.	.	.	.	72	72
Total	6	65.00	4.604	1.880	60.17	69.83	59	72

Table 7 ANOVA

Scholarship holders' percent					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	98.000	4	24.500	3.062	.402
Within Groups	8.000	1	8.000		
Total	106.000	5			

Since calculated F0.05 is lesser than table value of F0.05, therefore we can conclude that both the populations have the same variance. Similarly, Sig value 0.402 is greater than the level of significance 0.05. It means that there is no significant difference between the Ishan Uday Scholarship recipients and no scholarship recipients in case of academic performance. Therefore, H02 is accepted.

Impact of Ishan Uday Scholarship on Academic Excellency Indicators

The effectiveness of a scholarship program may be judged on the basis of reducing financial

stress, aspirations towards higher level, promotion of reading habit, utilization of fund for reading purpose, etc besides secured GPA or percentage of marks. Scholarships are considered as blessing for economically disadvantaged students in attaining their educational goals (Tomul et al). Scholarships provide motivation to students to perform well, to attain good GPA, better expectation for future, etc. From these viewpoints we can judge the efficacy of Ishan Uday Scholarship on academic excellency with the help of responses' percentages of students' beneficiaries against the survey questions as represented in table-8.

Table 8 Question Wise Response Percentage of Student Beneficiaries

	Yes	No	Indifferent
Did receiving the Ishan Uday Scholarship influence your decision to pursue higher education?	69%	24%	7%
Did the Ishan Uday Scholarship motivate you to achieve better grade or percentage?	84%	12%	4%
Have you observed a significant improvement in your academic performance after receiving the scholarship?	68%	18%	14%
Did the scholarship help to reduce your financial stress related to education?	91%	5%	4%
Did you utilize the major amount of scholarship for study purpose?	59%	33%	8%

Source: Questionnaire and Author's calculation

From the table-8, it is evident that the Ishan Uday Scholarship has been able to affect positively to student community towards academic excellence. The Scholarship has motivated the students to enrol in higher education and to labour for better grade. This Scholarship has been able to reduce the financial stress to a great extent during the process of higher education. However, though the scholarship grant is given for study purpose, but due to poor economic background, students are compelled to spend for essential purposes other than education.

Suggestions

It is evident from the study that there are differences among the North-Eastern States in case of CAGR of Ishan Uday scholarship beneficiaries which is contrary to the principle of equal access and opportunity of higher education to all. Therefore, measures need to be undertaken to create awareness among the students about the scholarship scheme. Secondly, the mismatch between the CAGR of Ishan Uday beneficiaries and CAGR of GER reveals that the scholarship scheme has not been used as tool for increasing the GER. It suggests the adoption of sound strategy for attracting students from socio-economically disadvantaged sections under the scholarship scheme to increase GER. Thirdly, comparison of academic performances between the scholarship beneficiaries and no-scholarship beneficiaries shows that the Ishan Uday Scholarship does not have a great impact on academic improvement. Therefore, there should be an academic evaluation process for the scholarship beneficiaries and academic improvement should be a criterion for disbursement the remaining instalments.

Fourthly, it is found that students spend a huge amount of the scholarship fund availed in non-academic purpose which is contrary to the objective of ensuring academic excellency of the Ishan Uday Scholarship.

Conclusion

Government of India has been implementing various schemes or projects in recent years to empower human by offering higher educational opportunities to all sections of people. Increase of GER is the prime objective of National Education Policy. To increase the GER of North-East India, Government of India has been disbursing fund under Ishan Uday Scholarship program. However, based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the effect of this scholarship program upon the increase of GER is not significant as expected. Inequalities among different states in case of number of students selected for this scholarship and GER need to be addressed. The effect of this scholarship on students' motivation, decision towards quality higher education is highly appreciable. But there is little difference between the scholarship holders and no scholarship holders in case of academic success. It demands the adoption of post scholarship grant assessment mechanism to ensure more academic performance. Undoubtedly, this scholarship grant has been able to reduce the financial stress for higher education. However, importance has to be given on the utilization pattern of the grant for academic purpose.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations

This study is confined on the empirical sample

survey of only Ishan-Uday Scholarship beneficiaries and no scholarship beneficiaries. Comparative study of the Ishan Uday Scholarship with other scholarship may be more effective from the viewpoint of higher education goals. Secondly, Only the students of Assam at under-graduate level have been considered. Since state wise and program wise, students need, perspectives, motivation, confidence, etc are different, therefore, it demands a comprehensive study. Further the efficacy of a scholarship program depends on the factors like students' awareness, financing or aiding pattern, continuity, etc. However, this study is limited to GER and academic performance. Further research on the effect of the Ishan Uday Scholarship on the academic performances of the beneficiaries on the basis of utilization pattern may be fruitful for the policy makers.

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