



Voice of Jagadguru

advaitam paramanandam

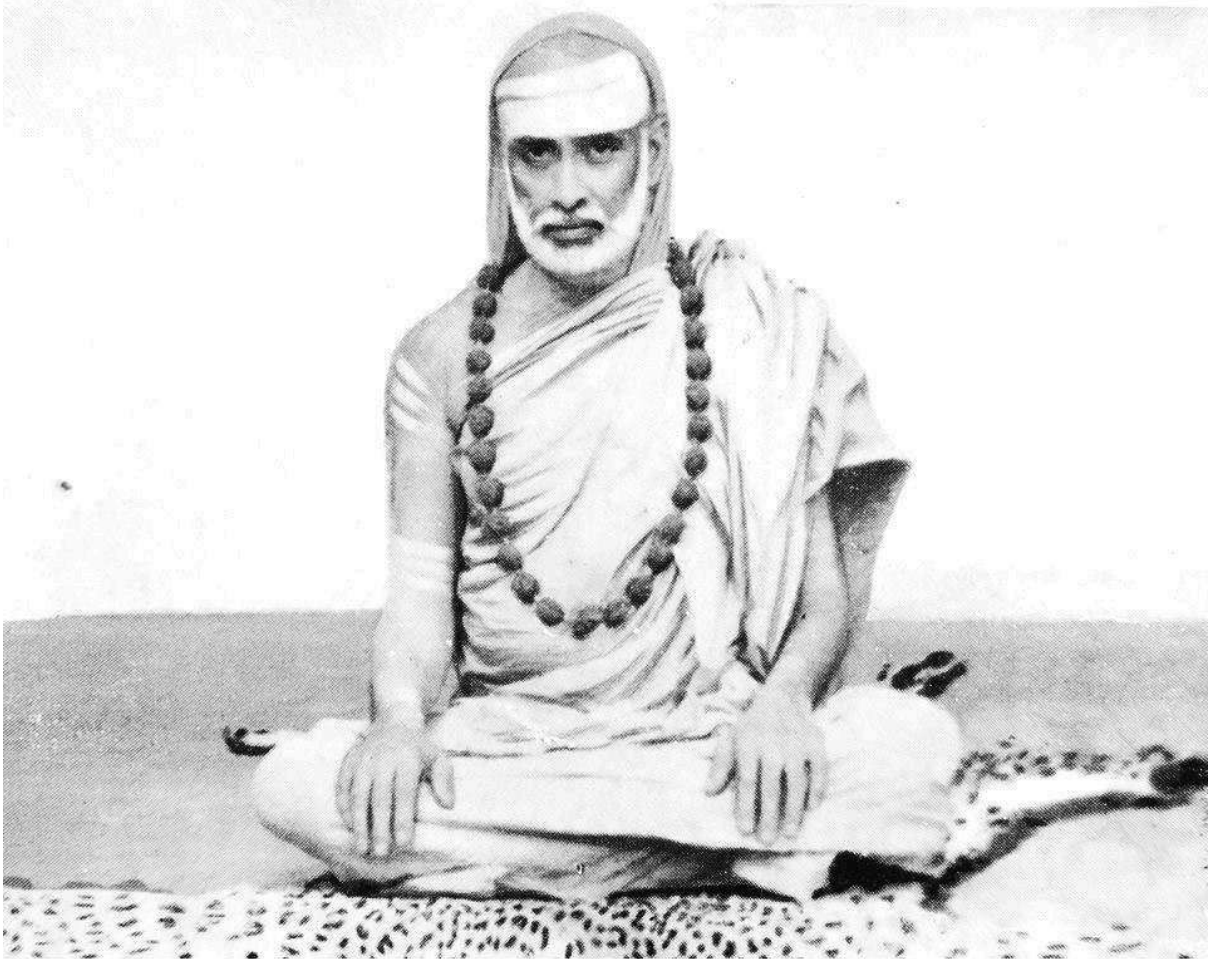


an e-magazine on advaita



64th Aradhana of 34th Peedathipathi of Śrī Sringeri Sharada Peetham Jagadguru Śrī Chandrashekara Bharati Mahāswāmi (October 9th 2018)

ACHARYAL SANDESH



THE SCOPE OF BHAJANA

One evening, there was a conversation between our Jagadguru Śrī Chandrashekara Bharati Mahāswāmi and a bhakta with general aspects at the beginning and gradually, it turned on to the subject of Bhajana, singing of devotional to the party in attendance mentioned that such devotional exercises had an exhilarating as well as great soothing effect on our wayward minds and that it was pleasing to find that bhajana parties were being formed in increasing numbers in every town and village.

We submit our efforts at the Lotus feet of Jagadguru Śankarācārya His Holiness Mahāsannidhānam Śrī Śrī Śrī Bhāratī Tīrtha Mahāswāmi-ji and Jagadguru Śankarācārya His Holiness Sannidhānam Śrī Śrī Śrī Vidhuśekhara Bhāratī Mahāswāmi-ji



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Acharyal : I am very glad to hear this. But I have heard that at the same time the observance of our religious rites is steadily going down. Why is it so?

Bhakta : It is mainly because the ordinary people lack faith in the efficacy of religious rites that they resort to this bhajana for pleasing God.



Acharyal : I suppose then that many of the persons engaged in bhajana may not care for or may even neglect their ordinary religious duties like the sandhya worship.

Bhakta : Yes. They even go the length of saying that while engaged in bhajana they can give up even the sandhya worship, because bhajana being a higher kind of worship makes sandhya unnecessary and redundant.

Acharyal : As a general proposition, it is quite true that the greater includes the less. But how do we know that bhajana is of greater efficacy than karma in the matter of pleasing God ?

Bhakta : Bhajana is a direct appeal to God while karma is but an indirect appeal through the observance of rituals.

Acharyal : I suppose you concede that we have never met God personally.

Bhakta : Certainly, I do.

Acharyal : You must also concede that we can never of our own accord find out what will please God and what will not, for we cannot ask Him directly nor can He tell us in person.

Bhakta : It may be so, but we can easily ascertain it from the scriptures (Sruti), which embodies His teachings.

Acharyal : You may also add the Smritis, especially the Bhagavad Gita, which record in no unmistakable terms His mind as divulged to those who have had the rare fortune to hold direct communion with Him, both in the spirit and in the flesh.

Bhakta : Certainly.

Acharyal : And what do they teach us ?

Bhakta : They certainly do not discount bhakti.

Acharyal : Certainly not. But the question is, what is bhakti ? Is it your bhajana or it is karma ?

Bhakta : How can karma be bhakti ?



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Acharyal : If fact, you will find that karma alone can be bhakti and certainly not the bhajana, if it is inconsistent with or is divorced from karma.

Bhakta : How can that be ?



Acharyal : The Lord tells us quite unambiguously “Man attains perfection by worshipping God by performing the karma enjoined for him.” He clearly enunciates here the proposition that the way to worship Him is to perform each one’s assigned karma.

Bhakta : But such a performance of karma is not the only way in which devotion can be shown to the Lord.

Acharyal : It is the only way for those on whom karma is enjoined.

Bhakta : Surely a person who spends his time in prayer and contemplation of the Lord is as

much a bhakti as, if not more, the one who busies himself with outward rituals.

Acharyal : Leave again comparing. He will not be a bhakti at all if he chooses to neglect the karma enjoined on him and if he chooses to neglect it in favour of mental prayers and contemplation.

Bhakta : Why so ?

Acharyal : Take the ordinary case of a master and his servants. Suppose one of his servants is always standing before him and ever singing his praises. The master may sometimes ask him to fetch something from another room. Suppose the servant replies, “O Master, I cannot bear the thought of parting from you even for a moment. I cannot forego even for a moment the pleasure and the privilege of ever looking at your handsome and noble face. I like to be ever with you to look upon your face and to praise you by recounting your inestimable qualities. Don’t ask me to leave your presence.”

Suppose again there is another servant who is always away from the presence of the master, but is carrying out with scrupulous care all the commands of the master, communicated to him either by the master personally or through his deputies. Wherever the master turns, he finds that he has been most willingly obeyed by this servant who nowhere seems to intrude on him.

Which do you think is the more devoted of these two servants and with who your opinion, will the master be pleased more ?

Bhakta : Certainly the latter.



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Acharyal : Is a father happy with the child who always prefers to sit on his lap and declines to do anything or with the one who is going out on errands ?

Bhakta : With the latter, I should think.

Acharyal : Further, can you grant that the servant or the boy, who refuses to leave the presence of his master or father and does not carry out his orders, is really devoted at all ?

Bhakta : Surely disobedience cannot go hand in hand with devotion.

Acharyal : Quite so. The primary test of devotion in any sphere of life is obedience, unquestioning and loving obedience, not inquisitive or grumbling obedience.

Bhakta : Certainly.

Acharyal : "The Sruti and the Smriti are the commands of Myself" says the Lord. Can you logically conceive of a devotion to the Lord side by side with a disobedience of His commands ?



Bhakta : I now see that bhajana can never be a substitute for karma.

Acharyal : It can never be.

Bhakta : What then is the function of bhajana? It cannot certainly be all waste.

Acharyal : A servant, when he finds leisure after discharging all his duties, may certainly stand in the presence of the master, but not when he has got duties to perform. Similarly a person, who after performing all the karma enjoined on him still finds leisure, can spend it in prayer or in singing the praises of the Lord and thus utilize the leisure to the best advantage. Bhajana is thus intended only for the occasions of leisure in the midst of karmic duties.

Bhakta : I fear if a Brahmana should be asked to perform properly all the duties enjoined on him by the Vedas and the Smritis and then have bhajana he may not have time for bhajana at all.

Acharyal : It is not quite so. It is only the lazy people that are ever short of time. The busy ones are always able to find leisure.

Bhakta : It seems to me that if bhajana is to be done only at the times not occupied by religious duties, the castes other than the Brahmanas will have more leisure for it, as they have to perform only very few religious observances and would seem to be, therefore, more competent to take up bhajana.

Acharyal : Quite so. It is intended more for them than for the Brahmanas.

Bhakta : Is it not an anomaly that the Brahmanas should be denied equal privilege in this matter?

Acharyal : No. As I told you, they are not denied this privilege as you call it, for they can enjoy it in their leisure moments. Further, you forget that the carrying out the commands of the Lord is a greater act of devotion than singing His praises. Now you may look at the matter from another point of view also.

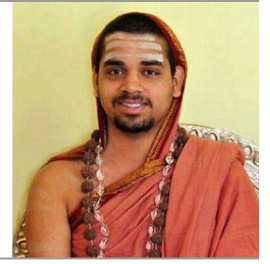


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Bhakta : what is that?

Acharyal : A servant who prefers to look at the kind face of his master and avoids performance of his duties does so because he derives pleasure from being with the master and fears a cessation of that pleasure if he has to perform his duties.



Bhakta : It may seem to be so.

Acharyal : The only consideration therefore which weighs with him in determining his own conduct is his own pleasure and not the pleasure of his master.

Bhakta : Strictly analysed, it is so.

Acharyal : Can you call such a servant, who places his own selfish pleasure far above his master's pleasure to the extent of ignoring or disregarding the latter, a 'devoted' servant in any sense ?

Bhakta : Certainly not.

Acharyal : Similarly, if a so-called bhakti prefers to sing to the accompaniment of enchanting music the praises of the Lord, at the

same time ignoring, neglecting and disregarding his divine commands, can you call him a 'devotee' at all.

Bhakta : I fear not.

Acharyal : Again please consider for a moment that the so-called bhakti has a conception of the Lord only as a very attractive object intended for his own enjoyment. What can be more profane than dragging down the All-conscious, Omnipotent Lord to the level of a toy intended for one's amusements and pleasure? To seek to enjoy the Lord as an object of pleasure is sheer profanation, which should never pass off under the name of devotion. Real devotion lies in carrying out His dictates implicitly. To disobey Him in action and to profess allegiance in words is blasphemy. It is not bhakti. By bhakti is meant single-pointed devotion uniformly expressed in mind, speech and body.



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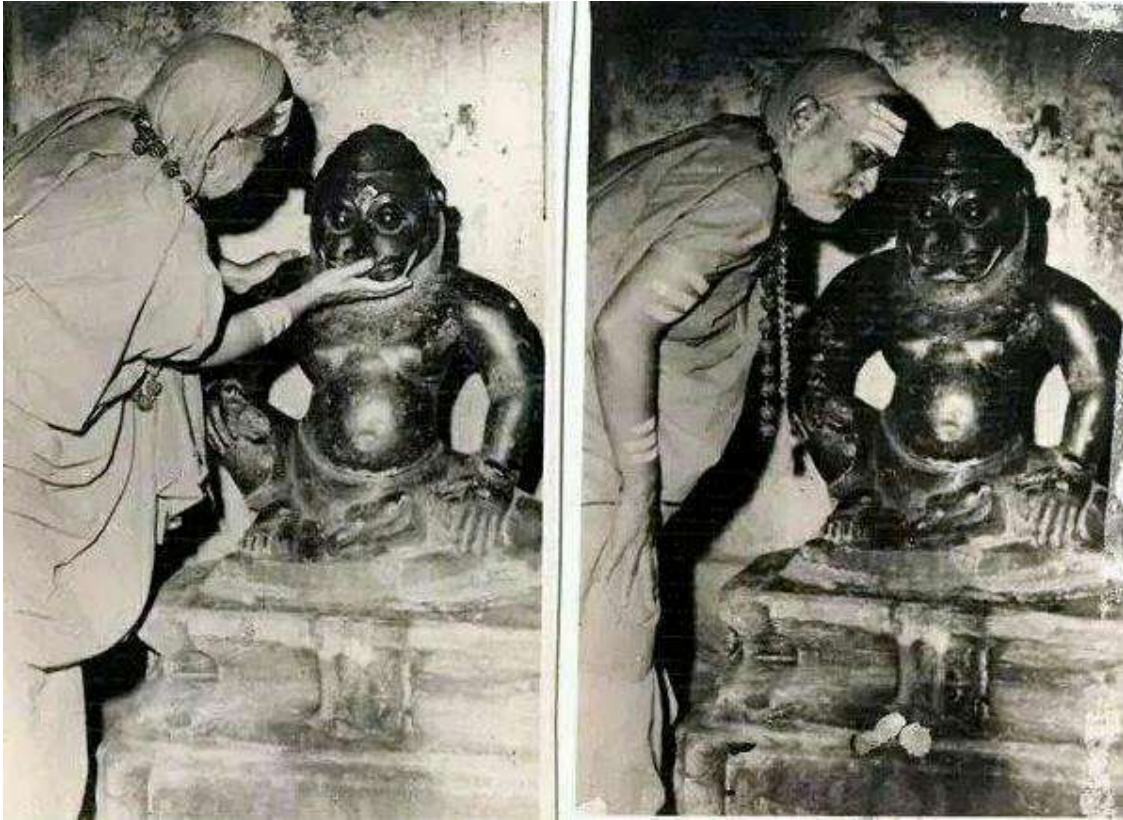


29th Aradhana of of 35 th Peedathipathi of Śri Sringeri Sharada Peetham Jagadguru Śri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Mahāswāmiġi (1st October 2018)

FEW DIVINE STORIES BY JAGADGURU ŚRI ABHINAVA VIDYATIRTHA MAHĀSWĀMIġI IS GIVEN HERE.

INSIDIOUS ATTACK OF DESIRE

A group of monkeys dwelt in a forest. One day, the leader declared, "Humans fast on ekādaśī,



days and thereby obtain puṇya. We too shall fast on ekādaśī." So, on the next ekādaśī, a; of them assembled and sat on the ground, with their eyes closed. After some time, one of them said, "We are unsafe sitting motionless on the ground. A herd of elephants passing by may trample us. It is also possible that a passing tiger may maul us. Further, as we are tree-dwellers, remaining continuously on the ground is uncomfortable for us. So, why not we climb the trunks of trees and remain at the start of the branches? We will be safer and yet will not be close to the fruits at the end of the branches." His suggestion was appreciated by them and they implemented it.

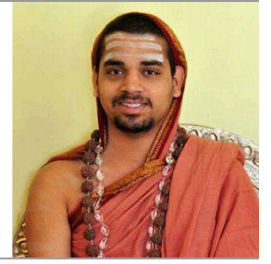


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Some time passed. Another monkey said, “A Cheetah can attack us here. Were we to go to the end of the branches, we will be better off. Cheetahs cannot come there because the portions concerned will not support their weight. Further, we can easily save ourselves by jumping to the next tree. We can also save ourselves easily from snakes. We could sit facing away from the fruits, keeping a watch on the ground and the tree trunks.” This idea too was likely by all and immediately implemented.

Some more time passed. Then, one monkey said, “Continuously watching the ground is terribly boring. Why not we turns to spot danger? The rest of us can then feel free to look around and thereby avert boredom. Surely, no fast will get broken even if our eyes were to momentarily fall on a fruit.” “He is right”, felt the others. Soon, they were frequently eying the fruits.



It was not long before monkey opined, “While we are seated here, we might as well feel the fruits to identify the ripe and juicy ones. That will make our task of foraging easier tomorrow. After all, we will be hungry then and would not like to spend much time picking the right fruits to eat.” There was no voice of dissent. Soon, the monkeys got busy feeling the fruit, with their hands lingering for a while on the good ones.

An aged monkey then said, “Not only will we be hungry tomorrow morning but also weak. Setting out for forage will be difficult. So, let us pluck the good fruits now and keep them ready for eating tomorrow.” “A wise suggestion” though the others and began to pluck fruits.

A little later, another aged monkey said, “One cannot pick good fruits merely by feeling them. Smelling them is also necessary. After all, a fruit may be nice to feel but may smell bad. Definitely, we would not like to eat any foul-smelling fruit.” The others agreed. So, all of them began to smell the fruits plucked and to throw away those whose smell was unsatisfactory.

Some time passed. Another aged monkey said, “From experience, I know that even a fruit that is nice to look at, good be feel and pleasant to smell can have a rotten core or worms. Thus, tasting fruits by biting each of them is necessary to confirm that the fruits we will be eating tomorrow morning are truly nice. Surely, we would not want to get a stomach-ache by eating bad fruits in the morning. Our ekādaśī fast will remain unbroken even if each of us were to taste a piece of fruit but take care not to swallow it.” The suggestion was regarded wise and implemented.

In but a few minutes, the monkeys began swallowing the delicious pieces of fruits in their mouths. That was the end of their fast.

Moral : Underestimation of the power of the senses to unsettle mind, flawed self-justification for one’s actions, overconfidence and making of compromises where one should not are among the factors that cause a person to have a moral or spiritual fall.

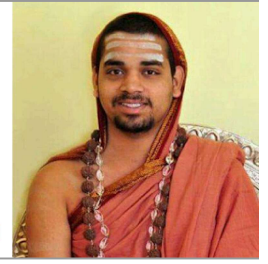


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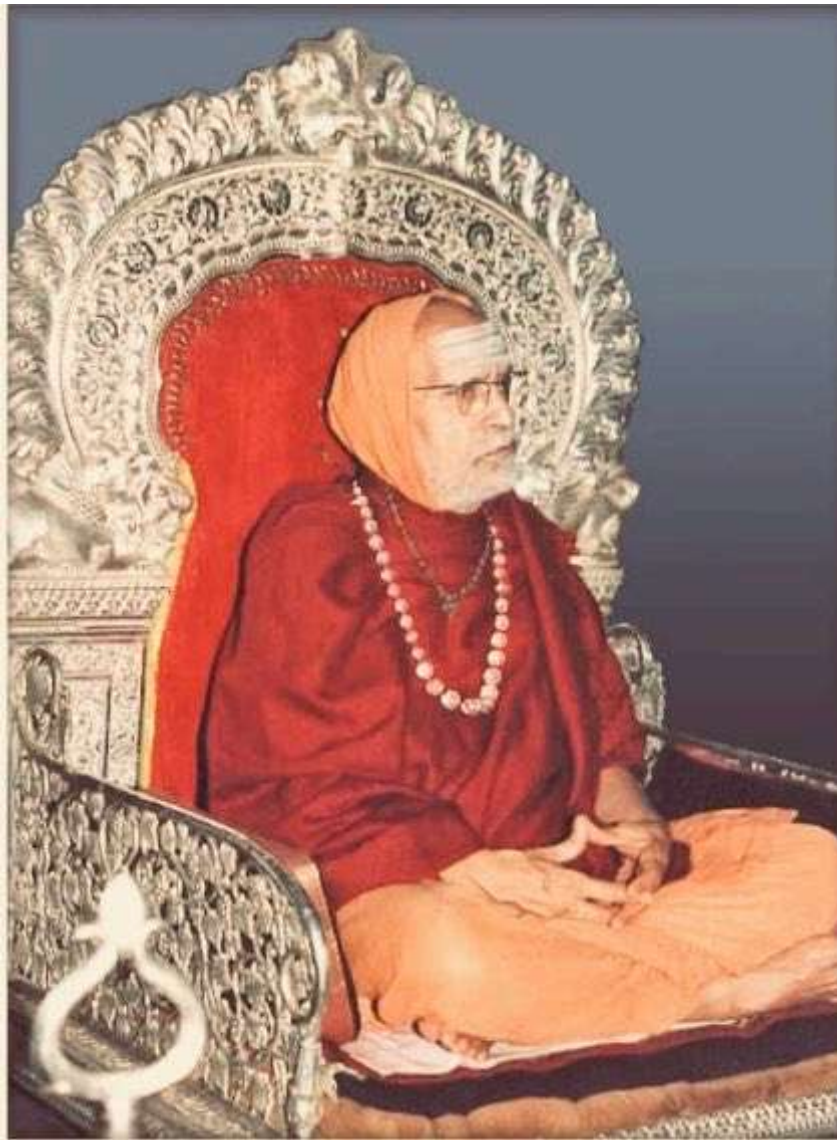
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THE VEDA DETERMINES WHAT IS DHARMA

A lawyer argued, "Your Honour, my client should be treated as guilty. It is true that he stole. But there is a reason for that. He was forced to commit the theft because his family was starving. With the stolen money, he not helped himself but also his family. While stealing, he did not destroy any property. In fact, he did not even damage the lock as he used a duplicate key. The money that he took away was meager compared to the rich man's hoard off black money. My client performed a service to the Government by unearthing black money. This apart, the wealthy man has so much

cash that this little depreciation ought to mean nothing to him".



How would the judge respond to such an argument? He would presumably declare, "I am not interested in such arguments that ignore the law of the land. Stealing is an offence under the Indian Penal Code. Even you admit that your client did steal. So, I am duty-bound to punish him." Then he would hold the lawyer's client guilty and send the thief to jail.

Moral : Judges determine whether an act is a punishable offence or not by relying on the penal code and not on fanciful arguments that disregard the penal code. Likewise, to determine what dharma is and what is adharma, a person must turn to the Veda and not to mere reasoning that is independent of the

scriptures. The penal code, having been formulated by humans, may require occasional revision. However, the Vedas, which emerged from Iśvara, are ever flawless.

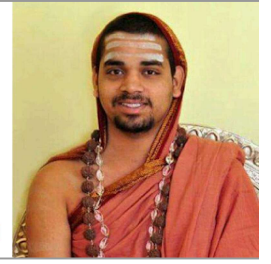


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TRUTH AND SILENCE



Once, three persons were proceeding to heaven in a celestial vehicle which had come to collect them. On their way, they chanced to behold a snake that was just about to swallow its prey, a frog. One of the three commented, "O serpent ! Do you not have any compassion for the frog? For heaven's sake, spare its life." The irritated snake cursed, "How dare you deny me my food? May you go to hell." Sad to say, the man went to hell.

The second man, who was bewildered on seeing this, supported the snake's stance and said, "The frog is but your natural food. You can surely eat it." Now, the frog became wild and retorted, "How dare you suggest that I be eaten! You have no kindness. May you suffer the tortures of hell." The man fell from the celestial vehicle. The third man, who remained silent, reached heaven.

Moral : This story illustrates that, on certain occasions, remaining silent is even better than speaking the truth.

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