



# Effect Of Globalization On Empowerment Of Rava Women Of Alipurduar District, West Bengal

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## **Abstract**

Globalization has brought significant socio-economic and cultural changes, affecting indigenous communities worldwide. This **study aims to** examine how globalization has affected the empowerment of women of Rava community in Alipurduar District, West Bengal focusing on key aspects such as education, employment, decision-making power, and cultural transformation. **The method** employed for the present investigation is qualitative approach. **It is found that** both the opportunities and challenges they face in adapting to new socio-economic conditions. Through in-depth interviews and observations, the research captures the diverse experiences of Rava women as they navigate changing socio-economic conditions. It also highlights the role of government policies, non-governmental organizations, and local community initiatives in fostering sustainable development and gender equity among Rava women in Alipurduar district of West Bengal.

**Key Words:** Globalization, Rava Women, Empowerment

## **1. Introduction**

Globalization has profoundly influenced societies worldwide, reshaping economic, social, and cultural structures. In India, its impact has been particularly significant among indigenous communities, including the Rava tribe, an ethnic group predominantly residing in the districts of Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar in West Bengal. The effects of globalization on Rava women in Alipurduar district are multifaceted, influencing their education, employment opportunities, social status, and cultural identity. Traditionally, Rava women have played crucial roles in household management, agriculture, and forest-based livelihoods. However, increased exposure to global markets, technological advancements, and changing economic dynamics has altered their traditional way of life. The introductions of modern education, employment in diverse sectors, and access to digital resources have contributed to their empowerment by enhancing their socio-economic participation. At the same time, the influxes of external cultural influences and market-driven changes have posed challenges to their indigenous knowledge systems, traditional occupations, and gender roles. While globalization has facilitated greater access to education and financial independence, it

has also led to cultural dilution and increased vulnerabilities in certain areas, such as job insecurity and migration.

## 2. Literature Review

Bhattacharya (2023) highlights the persistent gender gap in education and work participation in rural India, despite constitutional provisions for gender equality. The study reveals that literacy rates and school enrolment remain skewed along gender lines, impacting women's productivity and broader socio-economic progress. Education is crucial for improving family health, child survival, and economic growth, yet rural women face multiple barriers to accessing education and employment. Many women are engaged in the informal sector and perform unpaid labor, which limits their financial independence. Early marriage, family responsibilities, and economic constraints also hinder women's educational and professional aspirations. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations prevent women from prioritizing their careers, often making them feel guilty for pursuing personal ambitions. Sarkar (2020) examined the socio-economic and cultural evolution of the forest-dwelling Rava community in Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal, in the 21st century. The Rava, also referred to as Rava, are an indigenous tribal group in the Dooars region of West Bengal, known for their distinct socio-cultural traditions. Sarkar's study highlights the significant transformations within these communities, emphasizing the dynamic shifts shaping their way of life in the modern era. Similarly, Bora (2020) explored development models in Assamese rural areas, specifically focusing on the Rava community in Baksa District. Her research investigates the self-sufficient growth model adopted by the Assamese Rava Tribe, a Scheduled Tribe community. Instead of migrating to urban areas, the Rabha are actively working towards sustaining rural livelihoods through various initiatives. The study underscores their commitment to self-reliance and job creation, demonstrating their efforts toward sustainable development within their local environment. Biswas (2014), in a separate study, explored the evolving dynamics of tradition and change within the plain land Rava community from an anthropological perspective. The study examined how new occupational opportunities and the adoption of Hindu rituals and customs have led to significant social and cultural transformations among the Rava people. Biswas highlighted the positive influence of recent educational initiatives, noting that parents are now more engaged in ensuring that both their sons and daughters receive an education. Additionally, the study observed notable shifts in the everyday social and cultural practices of the Rava community whether they have begun adopting modern clothing and accessories, modifying their dietary habits, and even changing their traditional house construction methods consciously or unconsciously. The research also underscored how evolving occupational patterns and the increasing integration of Hindu religious customs have contributed to reshaping various aspects of their social and cultural life. Mandal & Roy (2013) examined the social movement of the Rava community, emphasizing their connections with other Indo-Mongoloid groups such as the Mech, Hajong, Garos, and Kochari. Their study shed light on the socioeconomic challenges

faced by the Rava people, detailing the factors contributing to their marginalization and exploring the underlying causes of their economic and social disadvantages.

### 3. Objectives

- i. To analyze the effect of globalization on the educational empowerment of Rava tribal women in Alipurduar district of West Bengal.
- ii. To investigate the effect of globalization on the economic empowerment of Rava tribal women in Alipurduar district of West Bengal.
- iii. To assess the influence of globalization on social awareness and decision-making capabilities of Rava tribal women in Alipurduar district of West Bengal.
- iv. To evaluate the overall impact of globalization on the cultural identity of Rava tribal women in Alipurduar district of West Bengal.

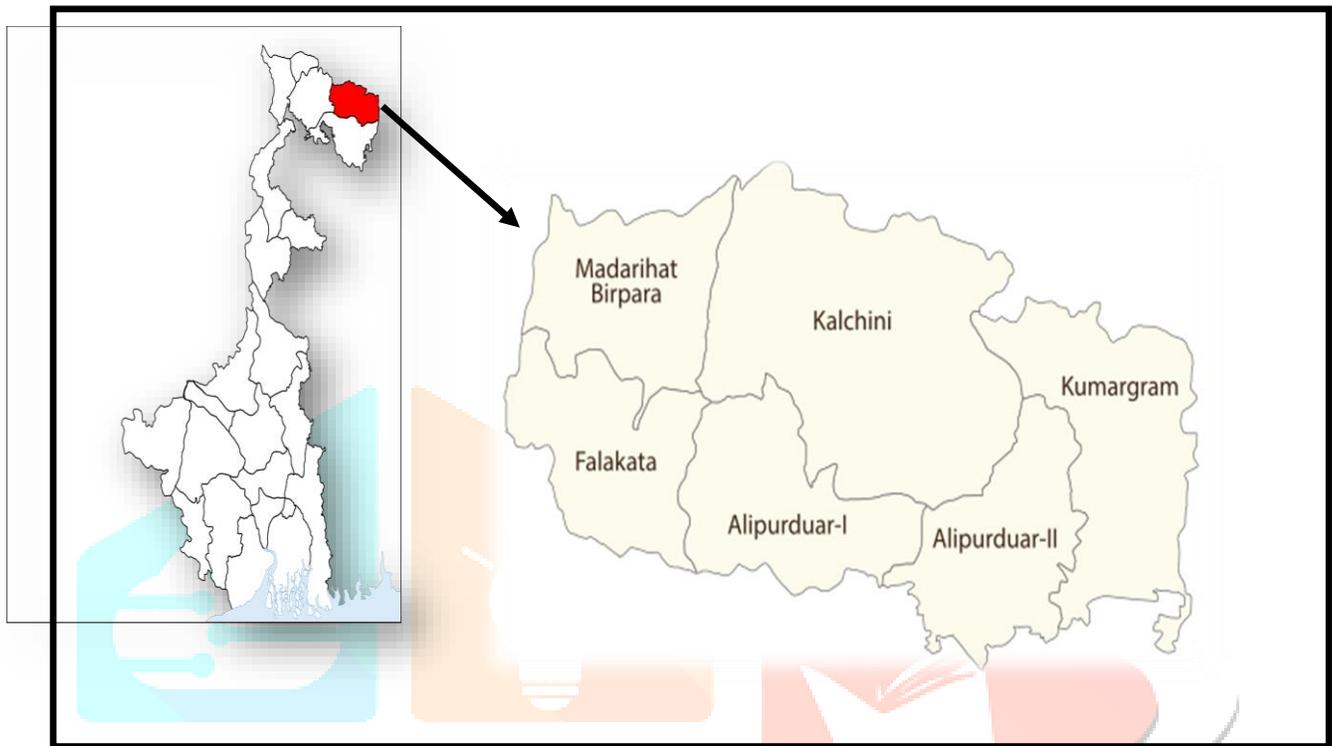
### 4. Design & Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the impact of globalization on the empowerment of Rava tribal women living at Alipurduar district. To conduct in-depth study in real life situation, data have been collected at random from key informants of different age groups. This approach was supported by examination of current government documents, reports and verbal interaction with key respondents. The interpretation has been made from the collected documents and information in order to reach a clear standpoint of the analysis.

**Study Area**

The research was conducted in selected villages of **Alipurduar District** of West Bengal, where the Rava community predominantly resides.

**Figure:1**



[Source: Google.com]

**Data Source**

- **Documents** (Govt documents and reports, draft of educational policies)
- **Key Participants** (Rava tribal women)

**Sample & Sampling Technique**

Using purposive sampling, 30 literate Rava women between the ages of 18 and 35 who lived in different villages in the Alipurduar district were chosen as the study sample. The distributions of participants are as follows:

**Table-1**

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
Secondary	8
Higher Secondary	12
UG & PG	10

**Table-2**

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
Employed (Govt./ Private)	15
Self Employed (Small Business / Entrepreneur)	5
Homemakers	10

**Data Collection Method**

Data collection for this study followed a structured process. First using purposive sampling 30 literate Rava women aged 18-35 were selected from different villages in Alipurduar District. The participants were categorized based on their education level and employment status. A questionnaire and semi structured interview schedule were developed to gather qualitative data. Field visits were conducted to administer the survey, to take interviews, and to observe real life style of Rava community women to assess socio-economic changes. Some information has also been collected from Govt. documents. The collected data were then analyzed to evaluate the influence of globalization on empowerment of Rava women.

**Tools Used**

- **Survey Questionnaire** – A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data.
- **Semi-structured Interviews**–Semi-structured interview schedule was also prepared to gather qualitative data.
- **Observations**– Real life situations of Rava women in the study area were observed.
- **Record keeping Method**– Official documents, policies, and reports related to Rava women in the study area were recorded and reviewed.

**5. Analysis & Interpretation of Data**

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes from the qualitative data. Key themes were categorized under dimensions such as education, employment, social roles, and cultural identity. During data analysis, coding and triangulation methods were used.

**6. Results and Discussion****i. Effect of Globalization on Educational Empowerment**

The study reveals that globalization has significantly influenced the educational aspirations of Rava tribal women. Among the 30 participants, 22 (73%) expressed that exposure to global trends, digital platforms, and modern education systems has encouraged them to pursue higher education. The table below presents the education level of respondents and their perception of globalization's role in their academic growth.

**Table-3**

Education Level	No. of Participants	Positive Impact of Globalization
Secondary	8	50%
Higher Secondary	12	75%
UG & PG	10	90%

Source: Field Survey

**Interpretation**

Among secondary-level students (8 respondents), only 4 perceived a positive impact of globalization (50%). At the higher secondary level (12 respondents), 9 reported a positive impact (75%). Among UG & PG students (10 respondents), 9 recognized globalization’s benefits (90%). The data suggests that as educational levels increase, the positive influence of globalization also rises.

**ii. Effect of Globalization on Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment has been a critical aspect of globalization's impact on Rava women. The study found that 20 out of 30 respondents (67%) believed globalization has enhanced their employment opportunities. The breakdown of employment status and globalization’s perceived economic benefits is illustrated in the chart below.

**Table-4**

Source: Field Survey

Employment Status	No. of Participants	Positive Economic Impact
Employed (Govt./ Private)	15	80%
Self Employed (Small Business / Entrepreneur)	5	70%
Homemakers	10	50%

**Interpretation**

The table presents the economic impact of globalization on Rava women based on their employment status. The highest number of respondents (15) are employed in formal jobs, 80% of them acknowledged that globalization positively impacted their economic independence by providing job opportunities, skill development, and financial stability. A smaller group (5) engaged in entrepreneurship or small businesses and 70% of them found globalization beneficial in terms of access to wider markets, digital business platforms, and financial resources. Homemakers formed a significant portion (10) of the respondents, only 50% felt a positive economic impact, suggesting that while globalization has introduced financial opportunities, many homemakers still face barriers such as skill gaps and socio-cultural constraints.

### iii. Influence of Globalization on Social Awareness and Decision-Making

Most of the participants opined that globalization has played a significant role in enhancing social awareness and decision-making skills among Rava women. About 24 participants (80%) acknowledged that exposure to external influences, media, and educational advancements have empowered them to make informed decisions regarding their careers, health, and societal roles.

A thematic analysis of interview responses highlights three major areas of impact:

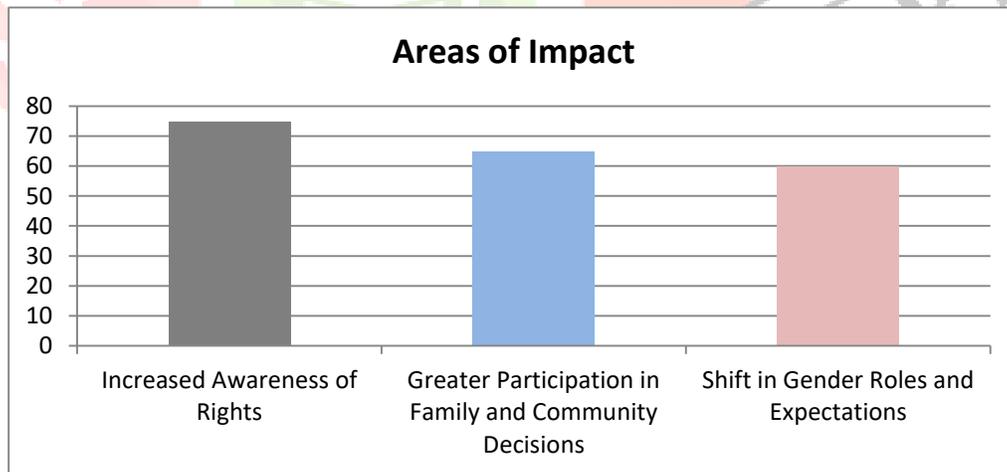
- **Increased Awareness of Rights (23)**
- **Greater Participation in Family and Community Decisions (20)**
- **Shift in Gender Roles and Expectations (18)**

**Table-5**

Areas of Impact	Participants	Percentage of Participants
Increased Awareness of Rights	23	76
Greater Participation in Family and Community Decisions	20	66
Shift in Gender Roles and Expectations	18	60

Source: Field Survey

**Figure:2**



#### Interpretation

Here's the bar chart displaying the impact of globalization on social awareness and decision-making among Rava women. It visually represents the percentage of participants affected by each theme, with the highest impact being on the awareness of rights, followed by participation in decisions and shifting gender roles.

#### iv. Impact on Cultural Identity

Despite the positive aspects of globalization, concerns over the erosion of traditional cultural identity were raised. Some respondents expressed concerns about the decline in cultural practices and language preservation due to Western influence. However, some respondents agreed that globalization also provides opportunities to showcase and promote Rava cultural heritage on digital platforms.

#### Key Observations

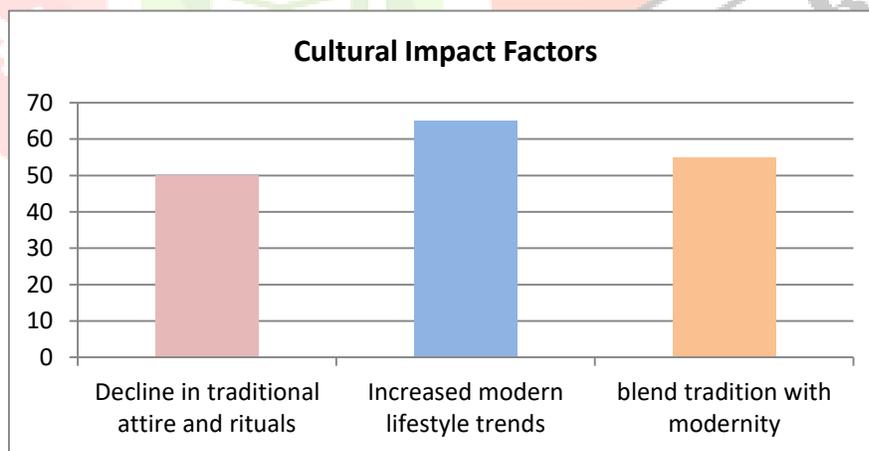
- 50% reported a decline in traditional attire and rituals.
- 66% noted increased participation in modern lifestyle trends.
- 56% acknowledged efforts to blend tradition with modernity through digital platforms and cultural programs.

**Table-6**

Cultural Impact Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Decline in traditional attire and rituals	15	50
Increased modern lifestyle trends	20	66
blend tradition with modernity	17	56

Source: Field Survey

**Figure:3**



#### Interpretation

Here is the bar chart visualizing the impact of globalization on Rava cultural identity. It highlights concerns over a decline in traditional attire and rituals, increased participation in modern lifestyle trends and blend tradition with modernity through digital platforms and cultural programs.

## 7. Challenges to Empowerment

Despite the opportunities created by globalization, Rava tribal women face several challenges:

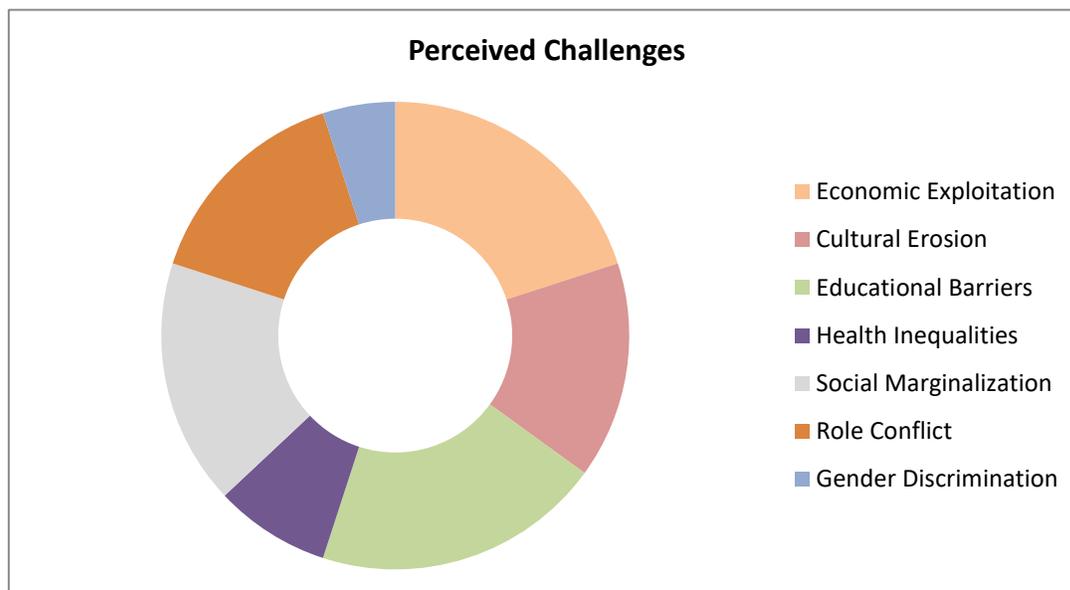
1. **Economic Exploitation:** Many women are trapped in low-paying, unregulated jobs with limited benefits.
2. **Cultural Erosion:** The loss of traditional knowledge, language, and customs poses a threat to the Rava community's identity.
3. **Educational Barriers:** Poor infrastructure, financial constraints, and socio-cultural norms limit educational attainment.
4. **Health Inequalities:** Access to affordable and culturally appropriate healthcare remains inadequate.
5. **Social Marginalization:** Gender discrimination and limited political representation continue to impede empowerment.

**Table 7**

Challenges	Percentage (%)
Economic Exploitation	20
Cultural Erosion	15
Educational Barriers	20
Health Inequalities	8
Social Marginalization	17
Role Conflict	15
Gender Discrimination	5

Source: Field Survey

Figure:4



### **Interpretation**

The graph highlights the key challenges perceived by Rava women in Alipurduar due to globalization. Economic exploitation (20%) and educational barriers (20%) emerge as the most significant concerns, indicating financial struggles and limited access to quality education as major obstacles to empowerment. Social marginalization (17%) and cultural erosion (15%) reflect the pressures of assimilation and loss of traditional identity, while role conflict (15%) suggests difficulties in balancing traditional responsibilities with new socio-economic roles. Health inequalities (8%) appear to be a lesser but still notable challenge, potentially linked to limited healthcare access. Gender discrimination (5%) is reported as the least perceived challenge, suggesting that other socio-economic factors may have a more immediate impact on their empowerment. Overall, the findings indicate that economic and educational limitations, along with social and cultural shifts, are the primary barriers faced by Rava women in adapting to globalization.

## **8. Important Findings**

Here are six key findings from the study based on the discussion:

### ***i. Educational Access and Challenge***

While globalization and government schemes like Kanyashree Prakalpa have improved school enrollment among Rava tribal women, significant challenges such as early marriage, financial constraints, and cultural restrictions continue to hinder higher educational attainment.

### ***ii. Economic Empowerment and Inequality***

Increased access to non-traditional jobs and microfinance opportunities has led to economic independence for many Rava women. However, wage disparities, exploitative labor conditions in tea

plantations, and limited access to markets for self-employed women remain key barriers to financial empowerment.

iii. ***Social Awareness and Participation***

Awareness of legal rights has increased due to NGO interventions and media exposure, Rava women now informed about their rights. Additionally, they actively participate in household financial decisions, a significant improvement compared to a decade ago.

iv. ***Health and Lifestyle Shifts***

While access to healthcare services, including maternal health and immunization programs, has improved, globalization has also introduced health concerns such as obesity and diabetes due to lifestyle changes and processed food consumption. The decline of traditional healthcare practices further affects well-being.

v. ***Cultural Identity at Risk***

Globalization has led to both empowerment and cultural erosion. While exposure to global cultures has encouraged gender equality and broadened opportunities, the loss of traditional language, customs, and community bonds is a growing concern among Rava tribal women.

vi. ***Persistent Structural Barriers***

Despite increased participation in social and political spheres, gender discrimination, limited political representation, and inadequate legal awareness continue to restrict the full empowerment of Rava tribal women. Economic exploitation, educational barriers, and role conflicts further exacerbate these challenges.

## **9. Policy Recommendations**

### ***Economic Policies***

- Promote fair wages and safe working conditions for tribal women in all sectors.
- Encourage entrepreneurship through skill development programs and access to microfinance.

### ***Educational Policies***

- Enhance the quality of education in tribal areas by improving infrastructure and teacher training.
- Provide targeted scholarships and incentives to reduce dropout rates among tribal girls.

### ***Healthcare Policies***

- Ensure affordable and culturally sensitive healthcare services for Rava women.
- Promote awareness about nutrition and non-communicable diseases.

### *Cultural Preservation*

- Document and promote Rava language, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Support cultural festivals and initiatives that celebrate tribal heritage.

### *Social and Political Empowerment*

- Strengthen women's participation in local governance and decision-making bodies.
- Conduct legal literacy and rights-awareness campaigns for tribal women.

## **10. Concluding Remarks**

The impact of globalization on the empowerment of Rava tribal women in West Bengal is multifaceted. The study highlights the profound impact of globalization on the empowerment of Rava women in Alipurduar district, revealing both opportunities and persistent challenges. While globalization has facilitated increased access to education, employment, and awareness of rights, it has also contributed to economic exploitation, cultural erosion, and social marginalization. Educational attainment remains a key concern, with a significant proportion of Rava women having limited access to higher education due to financial constraints, early marriage, and socio-cultural norms. Similarly, economic empowerment has been uneven, as many women face exploitative labor conditions and wage disparities despite their growing participation in non-traditional occupations. Social and political awareness among Rava women has improved, leading to increased participation in household decision-making and legal rights awareness. However, their role in community-level governance and broader political affairs remains restricted due to structural barriers and traditional gender norms. Additionally, globalization has introduced both positive and negative shifts in health and well-being. While access to modern healthcare services has improved, lifestyle changes have contributed to new health concerns, and traditional healthcare practices are declining. Cultural identity remains a major area of concern, as exposure to external influences has led to the loss of language, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems. While globalization has encouraged gender equality and broadened opportunities, it has also weakened community bonds and traditional socio-economic structures. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach involving government policies, NGO initiatives, and local community engagement. The sustainable empowerment of Rava women in the context of globalization necessitates comprehensive policies that ensure equitable economic opportunities, access to quality education and healthcare, the preservation of cultural identity and inclusive social and political participation.

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