

## **An Overview of Indian Film**

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### **Preamble**

Film is described as an effective and influencing medium of communication in modern society. The latest technological innovations and production techniques have enriched the capacity of the film medium as an audio-visual medium of communication. It is so much blended with a mass appeal as no other medium can shift or replace its space. Indian cinema tends to expose the contradictions of Indian society and turns out to be a process which spurt momentary illusions and satisfaction to its spectators and acts as a defensive mechanism of the public. India has emerged as a media super power over a period of time and India produces largest number of news reels, documentaries and films in the world. Film industry has grown commendably over a period of time in India. India produces largest number of news reels, documentaries and feature films in the world according to the latest statistics. In this paper an overview of Indian film is presented on the basis of review of relevant literature. Film industry has grown commendably over a period of time in India. India produces largest number of news reels, documentaries and feature films in the world according to the latest statistics.

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### **Early Indian Cinema**

The Lumiere brothers came over to India in 1896 and exhibited some films for the benefit of publics. Some foreign film makers also visited India during the last decade of 19th century and produced some films after visiting some places of historical and natural significance. Prominent among those films include *Coconut Fair* (1897), *Our Indian Empire* (1897), *A Panorama of Indian Scenes and Possession* (1898), *Poona Races* (1898) etc. In Mumbai Sukhram Bhatwadekar exhibited a film in 1897 on the basis of a wrestling match. He also produced a film in 1901 on the basis of a felicitation ceremony organized in honour of Paranjpe who exhibited great talent in Mathematics examination held at Cambridge University. It has been documented as the first information film by Barnow and Krishnamurthy. In Kolkatta, Hiralal Sen purchased a camera on the produced some films based on theatre performance in 1898. In 1899, Harishchandra Bhatwadekar produced a film called *Wrestlers* and exhibited it publicly. In 1900, F.B.Thanawala made two films namely *Splendid New View of Bombay* and *Taboot Procession* which attracted public attention. Bhatwadekar also made a film on the Delhi durbar of Lord Curzon in 1903. In 1910, Jem Shetji Premji Madan actively involved in film production, distribution and exhibition activities in Calcutta. He established a theatre in 1907 namely Elphinston Picture Palace which is known as the first Indian film theatre. Another businessman Abdul Yusuf Ali also worked as a film distributor during 1901–1907. In Bombay and Calcutta some documentary films and news reels were produced by the film makers during this period. Madan produced the first Indian film called *Pundalik* in 1912 after availing the technical assistance from a British man.

### **Era of Mooki Films**

The historians have considered Maharashtra as the motherland of Indian film industry. D.G.Phalke is known as the founding father of Indian film industry. He had obtained formal training in arts, music, acting, architecture and photography. He had also studied in details the book entitled *ABC of Cinematography* authored by Cicil Hepworth. He also visited England and obtained practical training in the art and craft of film making. He produced the first Indian feature film called *Raja Harishchandra*. Phalke went to Nasik and established Hindustan Film Company and produced films like *Sri Krishna Janma*, *Mohini Bhasmasura*, *Satyavan Savitri*, *Lankadahan*, *Kalimardhan*, *Setu Bandhan* and so on. He produced about 45 feature films and 16 small films during 1913 – 1932 and provided a solid foundation for the growth of Indian film industry. Another producer Baburao Painter was greatly influenced by the cinematic works

of Phalke and established Maharashtra Film Company which contributed about 200 film technicians.

Ardeshir Irani established the Imperial Film Company in 1926 and produced several Mooki films in India. He also promoted a good number of talented film makers and directors. Later on Chandulal Grover established another company namely Ranajit in Mumbai and produced about 100 films. Himamshu Roy and Devikarani established Bombay Talkies and trained a good number of film makers and technicians in India. In the decade of 1930, film industry was expanded in Maharashtra, Bengal, Orissa, Andhra, Mysore and Madras states. The British administrators constituted a committee under the chairmanship of T.Rangachariar to exam in the status and problems of Indian film industry. There were many British and Indian members who worked in this committee and recommended certain measures for the improvement of Indian film industry in India. In the decade of 1930s, Mumbai, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore cities emerged as prominent film making centres of the country. About 1300 films were made in the country during 1913-1934 in Hindi, Marati, Bengali, Oriya, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada languages.

The first Indian talkie film *Alam Ara* was produced in 1931 by Ardeshir Irani. During this period, 249 Tamil films, 134 Bengali films, 89 Telugu films, 87 Marati films and 9 Kannada films were produced. Prominent films of this period include - *Bhakta Prahlada* (1931), *Kalidas* (1931), *Chandidas* (1932), *Indra Sabha* (1932), *Poorna Bhagat* (1933), *Devdas* (1935), *President* (1937), etc. Madras city also grew well as a prominent film making centre in South India. In the beginning, a good number of mythological, historical and social films were produced in the country. The Mooki films were given local captions in order to facilitate better understanding among the audience in different parts of the country. G.Venkatasubbaih (1996) observes: "The very name of mooki films became very popular after the emergence of talki films in India. Before that, mooki films were known as bioscope films in the country. The mooki films were mostly based on important theatre plays and the theatre personalities dominated the early stage of Indian film making".

G.Paramesh (1995) writes: "In the beginning there was a close relationship between theatre and film world. The early films simply depicted the theatre culture, contents and performance in the country. The audience saw the theatre performance on the screen mostly. The scholars had termed the film making as an integrated exercise of theatre, literature and fine arts".

In the age of mooki films, about 1000 films were made in India. Unfortunately, most of the films are not documented for public exhibition and understanding due to non-availability of

technological devices. The Indian film maker also borrowed the film making techniques of their western counterparts. Most of the films were produced in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The prominent film producers of this period include – Phalke, Ganguli, Painter, Chandulal and Nataraj Modaliyar and others. The British administrators enacted the film regulations in order to prevent the production of unhealthy films in India.

### **Era of Talkie Films**

A new age of talkie films began in India in 1929. Ardeshir Irani produced the first talkie film namely *Alam Ara* in 1931. About 200 mooki films were produced during this year in India. Thoraval (2000) observes: “Indian theatre had remarkable influence on Indian film industry. Most of the film actors of the first generation were basically popular theatre personalities. The Indian folk theatre forms namely *Jatra of Bengal, Tamasha of Maharashtra, Kathakkali of Kerala, Krishnaleela of Uttar Pradesh, Bhavani Bhavai of Gujarat, Yakshagana of Karnataka* etc, had an impact on Indian early films. The Hollywood films of America were exhibited in India before the advent of talkie films”.

In the decade of 1930s, Prabhat Film Company, Modern Theatres, Bombay Talkies, Imperial Film Company, Wadia Movie tone, New Theatre Company, Madras Studios and other companies played a major role in the production of films. During 1931-40 Ardeshir Irani, V.Shantaram, Himamshu Roy, Wadia brothers, K.C.Barua, Bimal Roy, K.Subramanyam and others were the prominent film makers. Important films of this period include – *Alam Ara* (1931), *Kalidas* (1931), *Toofan Mail* (1932), *Chandidas* (1932), *Indrasabha* (1932), *Devdas* (1935), *Jai Bharat* (1936), *Amarjyothi* (1936), *Santa Tukharam* (1936), *Santa Jnaneshwar* (1940), *Dancer* (1940), *Gopalkrishna* (1948) etc. Most of the films were made in Hindi, Marati, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam languages during this period.

The decade of 1940s witnessed remarkable growth of Indian film industry. Babukhan, Sohrab Modi, Master Vinayaka, Devaki Bose, P.C.Barua, Bimal Roy, Pritwi Raj Kapur, N.S.Vasan, K.Subramanyam, P.Pullaiah became prominent film makers and directors of this period. Star system, formula film and black money affected the Indian film industry, comments Keval J.Kumar (2008:182). New organizations like A.R. Kardar’s ‘Kardar Studio’, V.Shantaram’s ‘Rajkamal Kalamandir Studio’, Mehboob Khan’s ‘Mehboob Studio’, Rajkapur’s ‘R.K.Studio’ etc, became prominent film making companies. The Government of India also established Films Division in 1949 in order to promote quality oriented films in the country. Prominent films of this period include – K.A.Abbas’s ‘*Journey of Doctor Kotnis*’ and ‘*Dharti ke Lal*’, Rajkapur’s *Barsat*, Sohrab Modi’s ‘*Pukar*’, ‘*Sister*’ and ‘*Roti*’, Wadia brothers’ ‘*Jungle Queen*’ and ‘*Delhi Express*’, Nadakarni’s ‘*Haridas*’, P.Pullaiah’s

'*Dharmapatni*', Rajachandrashekar's '*Ashok Kumar*', T.R.Raghunath's '*Kannagi*', Meyappan Chettiyar's '*Nam Iruvar*', A.S.A.Swamy's '*Velaikari*', Sundaram's '*Mantrikumari*', Pendarkar's '*Meet Bhakar*', Subbaiah Naidu's '*Vasanta Sena*', Gubbi Veeranna's '*Jeevana Nataka*', K.Subramanya's '*Bhakta Prahlada*', K.R.Sharma's '*Mahabhakte Hemareddy Mallamma*', M.A.N.Iyengar's '*Sati Tulasi*' etc. The prominent film makers of this period were Bimal Roy, Rajkapur, Gurudat, V.Shantaram, Mehboob Khan, Nadakarni, P.Pullaiiah, Rajachandrashekar, Meyappan Chettiyar, Gubbi Veeranna, Kemparaja Urs and others.

### **Indian Films in the Post-Independence Era**

The Indian films grew well statistically and qualitatively in the post-independence period. The film industry also grew on the basis of box office economics. Colour films also dominated the Indian films during this period. Despite large number of commercial films some film makers made earnest efforts towards making creative films. Satyajit Ray, Gurudat, Devanand, Rajkapur, Shantharam, Mehboob Khan and other committed and creative directors gave a new dimension to Indian films. Kundanlal Sehgal, Pankaj Malik, K.C.Day, Lathamangeshkar, Asha Bhosley and other talented singers also enriched the Indian film industry through their creative ventures.

In the decade of 1950s, Sohrab Modi's *Jhansi Ki Rani*, Shantaram's *Janak Janak Payal Baje*, Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito*, *Apoor Sansar* and *Jalsagar*, Mehboob Khan's *Mother India*, Rajkapur's *Awara* and *Sri 420*, Gurudat's *Kagaz ke Pool*, *Bazi* and *Pyasa*, Bimal Ray's *Do Bhiga Jamin*, K.Asif's *Moghal-e-Azam*, Pendarkar's *Chatrapati Shivaji*, Vasant's *Mr.Sampath*, Ramulu Naydu's *Azad*, Ananthamane's *Sangthe Eka*, Kemparaj Urs *Shani Mahatme*, Honnappa Bhagavatar's *Pancharathna*, Pattabhi's *Haribhakta*, Nagendra Rao's *Premada Putri*, B.R.Panthulu's *School Master* and films became the hit films. Creative acting, melodious music, effective photography, qualitative direction, luxurious sets and other aspects enriched the quality and status of Indian films in 1950s. In the decade of 1960s, Bollywood and regional films grew very well in the country because of the technological advancements and creative ventures. Film shooting took place in India and abroad. The Second International Film Festival was organized in Delhi in 1961.

The Government of India also established National Film Archives of India in 1964. The National Film Development Corporation also came into existence in order to promote new cinema in the country. Prominent films of 1960s include – Gurudat's *Sahib Bibi Aur Gulam*, Satyajit Ray's *Charulatha* and *Pakiza*, K.A.Abbas' *Shahar Aur Sapna*, Vijay Anand's *Hum Dono*, Devanand's *Guide*, B.R.Chopra's *Khanun*, Yash Chopra's *Dharmaputra*, Nitin Bose's

*Ganga Jamuna*, Rajkapur's *Sangam*, B.R.Panthulu's *Katta Bomman and Kittur Rani Chennamma*, G.V.Iyer's *Ranadhira Kantirava*, B.S.Ranga's *Amarashilpi Jakanachari*, N.Lakshminarayan's *Nandi and Uyyale*, Puttanna Kanagal's *Bellimoda and Gejjepooje*, Pattabhi Ramareddy's *Samskara, Hamsageete, Chomanadudi, Akrosh* and so on. Mrunal Sen produced India's first new wave film called *Bhuvan Shome* and created a history in the country. Several new wave films were also produced in other regional languages during this period.

In the decade of 1970s, new experiments were conducted by the progressive film makers in India. During this period, India emerged as the top most film producing country. The Government of India also formulated new censorship regulations and placed certain reasonable restrictions on the film makers. A good number of new wave films were produced in the country. The Indian film industry earned international recognition through the creative works of eminent and committed film makers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrunal Sen, Girish Karnad, Puttanna Kanagal, Girish Kasaravally, P.Lankesh, Prema Karanth, B.V.Karant, Shyam Benagal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, K.Balachandar, Mahendran, Maniratnam, Dadakondke, Patavardhan, Sumitra Bhavai, Nagabharana, M.S.Saty and others. In particular, the National Film Development Corporation played a decisive role in promoting parallel cinema in India.

During this decade, 70mm films were also made across the country. Many prominent artists ruled the roost and enriched the status of Indian film industry. They include – Amitabh Bachchan, Sanjiv Kumar, Rajesh Khanna, Shashikapur, Dharmendra, Hemamalini, Rekha, Shabana Ajmi, Rajkumar, N.T.Ramarao, M.G. Ramachandran, Nageshwar Rao, Shivaji Ganeshan, Udaya Kumar, Kalyan Kumar, Jayanti, B.Sarojadevi, Kalpana, Lakshmi and others. Prominent films of the decade include *Dastak* (1971), *Mera Nam Joker* (1971), *Vamsha Vruksha* (1971), *Kasturi Nivasa* (1971), *Sharapanjara* (1971), *Seeta Aur Geeta* (1972), *Bangarada Manushya* (1972), *Babby* (1973), *Ankur* (1973), *Garam Hava* (1973), *Kadu* (1973), *Uttarayanam* (1974), *Hamsageete* (1974), *Chomanadudi* (1974), *Dharmatma* (1975), *Mutyala Muggu* (1975), *Deevar* (1975), *Sholey* (1975), *Chotisibat* (1975), *Chit Chor* (1976), *Swamy* (1977), *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978), *Amar Akbar Anthoni* (1977), *Bhomika* (1977), *Swayamvaram* (1977), *Vayadinile* (1977), *Ghatashraddha* (1977), *Bhagyavantharu* (1977), *Dooratwa* (1978), *Mukhaddhar ke Sikhandar* (1978), *Khurbani* (1978), *Udaripookal* (1979), *Junoon* (1979), *Aparoopaa* (1979), *Harijan* (1980), *Ma Bhoomi* (1980), *Shan* (1980) and so on.

## Formula Films

In the decade of 1980s, the commercial films were produced in large number in order to entertain the masses and generate income. Most of the films glorified sex, romance, violence, dance, music and other ingredients. There was migration of artists and technicians from regional cinema to Hindi cinema. Market forces also controlled the Indian film industry. The underworld dons also invested money on film sector and commercialized the process of film making in India. There was visible deterioration of the quality of Indian cinema during 1980s. Despite certain drawbacks and limitations, some hit films were produced by the commercial and new wave film makers in the country.

Prominent among the films include – *Shankarabharanam* (1981), *Nasib* (1981), *Kalyug* (1981), *Umaravo Jan* (1981), *Sil Sila* (1981), *36 Chowrangi Lane* (1981), *Vijeta* (1982), *Seeta Rathi* (1982), *Ranganayaki* (1982), *Bara* (1982), *Cooly* (1983), *Ardhasatya* (1983), *Phaniyamma* (1983), *Party* (1984), *Saramsh* (1984), *Sagar* (1985), *Chidambaram* (1985), *Papori* (1985), *Masanada Hoovu* (1985), *Bettada Hoovu* (1985), *Manthan* (1986), *Nukkad* (1986), *Mirch Masala* (1986), *Izat* (1987), *Masoom* (1987), *Antarjali Yatra* (1987), *Halodhiyaa Choraye Bhoodan* (1987), *Pushpaka Vimana* (1987), *Nayagan* (1987), *Khayamat Se Khayamat* (1988), *Salam Bombay* (1988), *Khayal gadha* (1988), *Hiralal* (1988), *Tabarana Kathe* (1988), *Chandaneer* (1989), *Kanna* (1989), *Ankusham* (1989), *Lekin* (1990), etc.

During this period many creative directors brought international recognition to the Indian cinema through their committed works. Prominent among them include – Deepa Mehta, Meera Nayar, Kalpana Ajmi, Sayi Paranjape, Vijay Mehta, Shekar Kapur, Mahesh Bhat, Ketan Mehta, Prakash Zha, Girish Kasaravally, Maniratnam, John Abraham, Satyajit Ray, Mrunal Sen, Shyam Benagal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, P.Lankesh and others. Amitab Bachchan, Kamala Hasan, Rajani Kanth, Chiranjivi, Vishnuvardhan, Mummati, Nasiruddin Shah, Shashikapur, Rishi Kapur, Shabana Ajmi, Smita Patil, Dimpal Kapadia, Sridevi, Malasri and other artists were highly popular in the country in the 1980s.

During 1990s, the National Democratic Alliance Government gave the status of industry to Indian films and enabled the nationalized banks and insurance companies to extend financial assistance to the film makers. A new era of remake of films began during this period. Most of the films were commercial films which were made with a view to make money. A second innings of new wave cinema also began during this period. Sharukh Khan, Salman Khan, Sanjay Dat, Govinda, Chiranjivi, Rajanikanth, Kamala Hasan, Juhi Chawla, Madhuri

Dixit, Urmila Matondkar, Kajol, Shilpa Shetty, Ravina Tandon, Monisha Koirala, Shivaraj Kumar and others were the prominent artists of this period.

The hit films of 1990s include – Vijay Kondkey's *Maherchi Sadi* (1991), Ketan Mehta's *Maya Mem Nab* (1992) and *Roja* (1992), Kalpana Ajmi's *Rudali* (1992), Sayeed Mirja's *Sardar* (1993), *Darr* (1993) and *Nasim* (1995), Vijaya Tandon's *Kachehari* (1993), Govind Nihalani's *Dhrohakal* (1994), Shekar Kapur's *Bandit Queen* (1994) and *Ham Apke Hai Kaun* (1994), Jabbar Patel's *Mukta* (1994), Nagabharana's *Akasmika* (1994) and *1942-A Love Story* (1994), Adoor Gopalakrishna's *Katha Purusham* (1995), Maniratnam's *Bombay* (1995), Ram Gopal Verma's *Rangeela* (1995) and *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayange* (1995), Girish Kasaravally's *Mane* (1996) and *Tayi Saheba* (1998), Jayapatavardhan's *Manooski* (1996) and *Senani* (1996), Basuchatarji's *Swamy* (1997), *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997) and *Pardesh* (1997), Meeranayar's *Kamasutra* (1997), Govinda Nihalani's *Hajar Chowrasi Key Maa* (1997), Kumar Sahani's *Char Adhyay* (1997) and *Sarkar Nam* (1997), *Gupt* (1997) and *Satya* (1998), *Lohit Das Bhoota Kannadi* (1998), Jayaraj's *Kaliyatam* (1998), Shyam Benegal's, *Samar* (1998), Jabbar Patel's *Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar* (1999) and *Ham Dil Dhe Chuke Sanam* (1999), Deepa Mehta's *Water* (2000), P. Sheshadri's *Munnudi* (2000), Kamalahasan's *Hey Ram* (2000), *Mohabbaten* (2000) and *Kahona Pyar Hai* (2000) etc.

Television also gave a tough challenge to the film industry in the decade of 1990s. Bollywood and regional films were produced in good number in the country. The new wave films were screened in the international film festivals. During 1991 – 2000 about 800 commercial and new wave films were screened in the country. The film makers in India followed the middle path and struck a balance between the sociology and economics of film making in the country.

New Millennium Films the 21st century offers plenty of opportunities to the Indian film makers. Several creative directors, film makers, artists and technocrats have added a new dimension to film making in India. Many talented film personalities have cropped up over a period of time. The prominent films of new millennium include – *Jubaida* (2001), *Lagan* (2001), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), *Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gam* (2001), *Ashoka* (2001), *Devdas* (2002), *Ham Raj* (2002), *Munna Bai MBBS* (2003), *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2003), *Koyi Mil Gaya* (2003), *Dhoom* (2004), *Veer Zhara* (2004), *Black* (2005), *Salam Namasthe* (2005), *Rang De Basanti* (2006), *Don* (2006), *Chak De India* (2007), *Tare Jamin Par* (2007), *Ekalavya* (2007), *Kanjivaram* (2007) *Gandhi My Father* (2007) *Om Shanti Om* (2008), *Jodha Akbar* (2008), *Slum Dog Millionaire* (2008), *Sing is King* (2009), *Dhobi Ghat* (2010) etc.

The 'Adaminte Makan Abu' won the best feature film award in 2010. It was a Malayalam feature film directed by Salim Ahamed. The best popular film award was bagged by Hindi film 'Dabangg' directed by Abhinav Kashyap. In the year 2011, Soumitra Chatterjee received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his outstanding contributions to Indian cinema. The Marathi film 'Deool' directed by Umesh Vinayak Kulkarni bagged the best feature film. The best popular film award was given to another Tamil film 'Azhagarsamiyin Kuthirai' directed by Suseenthiran. Girish Kulkarni and Vidya Balan received the best actor and best actress awards respectively. Veteran Hindi film actor Pran received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in the year 2012. The Hindi film 'Paan Singh Tomar' directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia received the best feature film award. Another Hindi film 'Vicky Donor' directed by Sidhartha Siva received best popular film award. Irrfan Khan and Usha Jadhav received the best actor and best actress awards respectively. In the year 2013, eminent film personality Gulzar received Dadasaheb Phalke Award. The best feature film award was given to Hindi film 'Ship of Theseus' directed by Anand Gandhi. Rajkumar Rao and Geetanjali Thapa received the best actor and best actress awards respectively.

Prominent artists of the new millennium include Amir Khan, Salman Khan, Sharukh Khan, Abhishek Bachchan, Ritwik Roshan, Akshay Kumar, Prakash Rai, Vijay, Ganesh, Karishma Kapur, Aiswarya Rai, Rani Mukharji, Preeti Jinta and others. The Bollywood film industry has earned international recognition for certain cinematic experiments and contributions. The regional films are also racing against the time in reaching out to the audiences through qualitative cinematic experiments.

Baragur Ramachandrappa (2010) narrates the status of film in the age of globalization thus: "Globalisation is mainly based on capitalism. Hence, the social and cultural priorities are changing in the age of globalization which has motivated the film makers to produce films on the basis of box office economics and formula. The concepts of freedom and equality have been side-lined in the age of globalization. The human values are also changing in the name of economic liberalization. In the age of globalization, the film makers are compelled to make a compromise and win over the audience through certain business strategies".

The Indian culture and films are widely discussed in the international level. The Bollywood and regional films have grown commendably over a period of time and influenced the global film making values and tendencies. India and China will be the foremost nations which are going to make lot of difference in the process of international film making according to eminent director Shekar Kapur. Another talented film maker Amir Khan has also pointed out that the growth of healthy film literacy and film appreciation among the audiences in India

and abroad would facilitate remarkable progress of Indian film in the new millennium. The Indian films are screened in the international film festivals in good number in the recent times. There is a bright future for Indian cinema in the years to come.

### **Conclusion**

India has demonstrated commendable progress in the field of film industry. Many stalwarts have built the Indian film industry laboriously over a period of time. Several changes have taken place in the process of film making based on creativity and technological developments. Film industry has also been recognized as an industrial activity by the Government of India. The banks and other lending institutions have come forward to extend financial support for film making. The National Film Development Corporation has also played a crucial role in the production of series of new wave films which have sensitized various stakeholders of national development. Indian films have also gained national and international awards for their creativity and artistic excellence. Mega films are also made on the basis of multi-crore investment by the film makers in the age of globalization. Several innovative approaches are explored by the directors and film makers. India continues to be a dominant power in the film industry across the globe.

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