

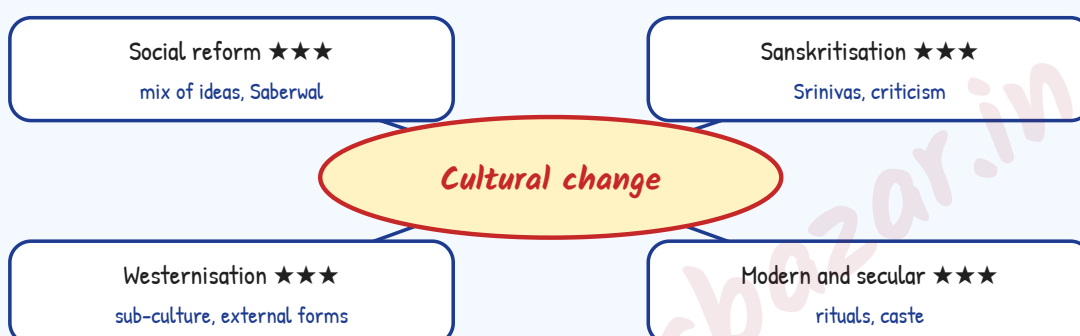
Class 12 · Sociology (039) · Book II: Social Change and Development in India · Chapter 7 (NCERT Ch 2) · CBSE 2026-27

Chapter 7 Cultural Change



Social structure and culture · 19th and early 20th century social reform movements: mix of ideas, Saberwal's three aspects, common themes and differences · four kinds of change: Sanskritisation (and its criticism), westernisation, modernisation, secularisation · secularisation of caste · rituals and secular dimensions

Chapter map (★ = most important for exams)



Syllabus and weightage

Unit 9: **5 marks**. Very frequent: reform movements' common themes and differences, Sanskritisation vs de-Sanskritisation, criticism of Sanskritisation, westernisation (Srinivas' definition; imitation of external forms), secular dimensions of ritual (cars at weddings), secularisation of caste.

★ **Exam tip:** **Social structure** = "a continuing arrangement of persons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions"; **culture** = "socially established norms or patterns of behaviour". Colonialism changed both: ways of life, norms, values, fashion, even body language.

7.1 Social reform movements ★★★

Two developments, both products of colonial rule: (1) **deliberate efforts** of 19th-century reformers and early nationalists to change practices that discriminated against women and lower castes; (2) less deliberate but decisive changes – **Sanskritisation** (which pre-dates colonialism), **modernisation, secularisation and westernisation**.

- Reform movements arose to meet the challenges of colonial society: "social evils" – **sati, child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, caste discrimination**.
- Fighting discrimination was not new (Buddhism, Bhakti, Sufi movements); what was new was the **modern context and mix of ideas** – a creative combination of **western liberalism** and a **new look at traditional literature**.

The mix of ideas (Box 2.1) ★★

- **Raja Rammohun Roy** attacked sati using both humanitarian and natural-rights doctrines and the Hindu shastras.
- **Ranade**'s writings gave shastric sanction for widow remarriage.
- New education was modernising and liberal – drawn from the European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment; humanistic, secular, liberal.
- **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan** stressed free enquiry (**ijtihad**) and similarities between Koranic revelation and laws of nature discovered by science.
- **Kandukuri Viresalingam**'s *The Sources of Knowledge* used navya-nyaya logic; he also translated Julius Huxley.

Satish Saberwal: three aspects of the modern framework ★★★

Aspect	Examples
Modes of communication	Printing press, telegraph, later microphone; steamships and railways moved people, goods and ideas. Reformers of Punjab and Bengal exchanged ideas with Madras and Maharashtra; Keshav Chandra Sen visited Madras (1864); Pandita Ramabai travelled widely; missionaries reached Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya
Forms of organisation	Modern bodies – Brahmo Samaj (Bengal), Arya Samaj (Punjab), All-India Muslim Ladies Conference (Anjuman-E-Khawatin-E-Islam, 1914); debates in newspapers and journals; translations (Vishnu Shastri's Marathi translation of Vidyasagar in <i>Indu Prakash</i> , 1868)
Nature of ideas	Liberalism and freedom; new ideas of homemaking, marriage, roles of mothers and daughters; self-conscious pride in culture; value of education – to be modern yet keep ancient heritage

- **Female education** was intensely debated; **Jotiba Phule** opened the first school for women in Pune. Justifications used both modern and traditional ideas (some claimed women were educated in pre-modern India; others said only a privileged few were). Phule recalled the glory of the **pre-Aryan** age; **Tilak** the **Aryan** period. Reform began a period of **questioning and reinterpretation**.

Common themes, significant differences ★★★

- For some, concerns were confined to **upper-caste, middle-class** women and men; for others, the injustices suffered by **discriminated castes** were central.
- For some, social evils came from a **decline of the true spirit of Hinduism**; for others, caste and gender oppression were **intrinsic to the religion**.
- **Muslim reformers** debated polygamy and purdah: **Jahanara Shah Nawaz** moved a resolution against polygamy at the All India Muslim Ladies Conference ("against the true spirit of the Quran"); *Tahsib-e-Niswan* supported it, others opposed.
- Debates within communities: the Brahmo Samaj opposed sati; orthodox Hindus in Bengal formed the **Dharma Sabha** and petitioned the British that reformers had no right to interpret sacred texts.

Different kinds of change: the four processes overlap and co-exist; the same person may be modern in some ways and traditional in others. Colonial modernity was paradoxical: the English-educated middle class read Enlightenment thinkers yet, humiliated by colonial rule, asserted pride in tradition. Tradition is living and modified: the modern way of wearing a **sari** combines it with a western petticoat and blouse; A.K. Ramanujan's father wore a turban and caste mark with Tootal ties and English serge jackets over a dhoti.

7.2 Sanskritisation ★★★

- Coined by **M.N. Srinivas**: the process by which a "low" caste, tribe or other group takes over the **customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life** of a high, especially "**twice-born**" (dwija) caste.
- Its impact is **many-sided**: language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life, ritual. Mainly within the Hindu space, though Srinivas saw it in other groups.
- It operated **differently in different regions**: where a highly Sanskritised caste dominated, the whole region was Sanskritised; where **non-Sanskritic castes dominated, their influence was stronger** – "**de-Sanskritisation**". In **Punjab**, Sanskritic influence was never strong; until the third quarter of the 19th century **Persian** influence dominated.
- Srinivas: Sanskritisation usually **improves a group's position** in the local hierarchy; it presupposes an improvement in **economic or political position**, or higher group consciousness from contact with a source of the "Great Tradition" (pilgrim centre, monastery, sect).
- Obstacles: dominant castes traditionally **punished** low castes who tried it. **Kumud Pawade**, a Dalit woman who became a Sanskrit teacher, faced hostility: "What comes by birth, but can't be cast off by dying – that is caste."

Criticism of Sanskritisation ★★★

1. **Exaggerates mobility**: it brings only **positional change** for some, not **structural change**; inequality persists.
2. Its ideology accepts the upper-caste way as **superior** and lower-caste ways as inferior; imitation is seen as natural.
3. It seems to **justify a model of inequality and exclusion** – belief in purity and pollution.
4. Adopting upper-caste rites leads to **secluding girls and women, dowry instead of bride-price**, and caste discrimination against others – it is **gendered**.
5. It **erodes Dalit culture**: the worth of their labour, crafts, knowledge of medicine, ecology, agriculture, animal husbandry is degraded as "shameful".

With anti-Brahmin movements and regional consciousness, Sanskrit words were dropped in several languages; the **Backward Classes Movement** stressed **secular factors** in mobility; dominant castes no longer wish to pass as Vaishyas or Kshatriyas – being a dominant caste is prestigious; Dalits now take pride in a Dalit identity.

7.3 Westernisation ★★★

- **M.N. Srinivas**: "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over **150 years of British rule**, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels ... technology, institutions, ideology and values".
- **Kinds**: (i) a westernised **sub-cultural pattern** among a minority who first contacted western culture – including **Indian intellectuals** who adopted western ways of thinking and life and supported their spread (many early reformers); (ii) the **general spread** of western traits – new technology, dress, food, habits; middle-class homes with TV, fridge, sofa set, dining table.
- Westernisation involves **imitation of external forms**; it does **not necessarily** mean adopting **modern values of democracy and equality**: western-educated people may hold prejudices; a family may have a western-style home but conservative ideas about women; **female foeticide** combines discrimination with modern technology.
- **Art and Literature**: Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Chandu Menon, Bankimchandra grappled with the colonial encounter. **Ravi Varma's** 1870 portrait of Krishna Menon's family (matrilineal Kerala) resembles a western

patrilineal nuclear family, blending flat watercolour style with oil perspective.

- **Generational conflict** is often seen as a cultural conflict from westernisation (an Assamese mother whose daughter wears pants and plays Whitney Houston instead of Bargeet).
- Srinivas: lower castes Sanskritise, upper castes westernise. But this is hard to sustain: **Thiyyas** of Kerala (not upper caste) consciously westernised to critique caste; for **Nagas**, English education brought mobility and a common language among tribes 20 km apart — they made English the official state language (Temsula Ao).

7.4 Modernisation ★★★

- From the 19th–20th century, "modern" became a positive, desirable value. Early meaning: improvement in **technology and production**; later: the **path of development of west Europe and North America**, which other societies were expected to follow.
- In India capitalism began in a **colonial** context, so our modernisation and secularisation are distinct from the west's. Jotiba Phule mocked upper-caste "modernists" who returned to "touch-me-not" Brahmanical attire after claiming their pensions.

Rudolph and Rudolph (1967): what modernity assumes ★★★

- Local ties and parochial views give way to **universal commitments** and cosmopolitan attitudes.
- Truths of **utility, calculation and science** take precedence over emotion, the sacred and the non-rational.
- The **individual**, not the group, is the primary unit of society and politics.
- Associations are based on **choice, not birth**.
- **Mastery** rather than fatalism.
- Identity is **chosen and achieved**, not ascribed.
- Work is **separated** from family, residence and community in bureaucratic organisation.

So behaviour and job choice are no longer decided by family, tribe or caste; what you depend on is what you achieve; a **scientific attitude** grows.

7.5 Secularisation ★★★

- In the modern west, secularisation means the **decline in the influence of religion**; modernisation theorists assumed modern societies become increasingly secular.
- **Indicators**: levels of involvement with religious organisations; their social and material influence; the degree to which people hold religious beliefs.
- But recent years have seen an unprecedented growth of **religious consciousness and conflict**; even earlier, modern communication, organisation and ideas produced **new religious reform organisations**.

Rituals have secular dimensions ★★★

- A considerable part of ritual in India refers directly to **secular ends** (passing exams, jobs, health).
- Rituals also have **secular dimensions** distinct from secular goals: occasions for **socialising** with peers and superiors; for **showing off** the family's wealth, clothing and jewellery.
- In recent decades the **economic, political and status** dimensions of ritual have become conspicuous: the **number of cars** outside a wedding house and the **VIPs** who attend are an index of the household's standing.

Secularisation of caste ★★★

- Traditionally caste worked within a **religious framework** of purity and pollution.
- Today it often functions as a **political pressure group**: caste associations and caste-based parties press demands on the state — this changed role is called the **secularisation of caste**.

- **Rajni Kothari (Box 2.5):** the question is not "is caste disappearing?" but "what form is caste taking under modern politics, and what form is politics taking in a caste-oriented society?" Politics organises support through existing structures; where caste is a main organisational cluster, politicians mobilise it — and in doing so **change the form of caste**. Complaints of "casteism in politics" seek a politics with no basis in society.

★ **Exam tip: Conclusion:** colonialism had lasting, often unintended and paradoxical consequences: western ideas of modernity shaped nationalists, prompted a fresh look at tradition by some and its rejection by others; equality and democracy transformed reform and nationalist movements.

NCERT questions, solved ★★★

1. Write a critical essay on Sanskritisation. 6

Ans. Meaning: M.N. Srinivas' term for the process by which a low caste, tribe or group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and lifestyle of a higher, especially twice-born caste, to raise its status. Its influence is many-sided (language, literature, music, dance, drama, ritual). It usually follows an improvement in economic or political position or contact with the Great Tradition, and varies by region (de-Sanskritisation where non-Sanskritic castes dominate; Persian influence in Punjab).

Criticism: (i) it exaggerates mobility — positional, not structural change; (ii) it accepts upper-caste ways as superior; (iii) it justifies inequality and purity-pollution; (iv) it is gendered — seclusion of women, dowry replacing bride-price; (v) it erodes Dalit culture and the dignity of labour. Today anti-Brahmin and backward-class movements stress secular routes of mobility and pride in Dalit and dominant-caste identities.

2. Is westernisation only about western attire and lifestyle? Or is that modernisation? 4

Ans. Westernisation (Srinivas) covers changes at the levels of technology, institutions, ideology and values from British rule — a westernised intellectual sub-culture and the general spread of western dress, food, gadgets, and influence on art and literature. Often it is only imitation of external forms and need not bring democratic, egalitarian values (e.g. western lifestyle with conservative views on women; female foeticide using modern technology). Modernisation is deeper: universal commitments, science and rationality, individualism, choice over birth, achieved identity, separation of work from family (Rudolph and Rudolph).

3. Short notes. 3+3+3

Ans. Rites and secularisation: rituals in India often serve secular ends and have secular dimensions — socialising, displaying wealth, clothing and jewellery; status shown by cars and VIPs at weddings; their economic and political aspects grow, so ritual itself becomes partly secular.

Caste and secularisation: caste, once embedded in religious purity-pollution, now acts as a political pressure group through caste associations and parties making demands on the state; Kothari: politics mobilises caste and thereby changes its form — the secularisation of caste.

Gender and Sanskritisation: adopting upper-caste rites brings seclusion of girls and women, dowry instead of bride-price, and restrictions on widows; so even when men's positional status rises, women's freedom may fall — Sanskritisation is gendered.

Four processes at a glance: Sanskritisation — imitate higher castes (pre-colonial); westernisation — British-era changes (external forms + values); modernisation — universalism, rationality, achievement; secularisation — declining role of religion, secular dimensions of ritual and caste.

CBSE board questions 2024–2026, fully solved ★★★

Every question on this chapter from the CBSE board papers of 2024, 2025 and 2026 (Sociology 039, paper code 62), with complete answers based on the marking schemes and NCERT. Where the board accepted more than one option, this is stated.

Multiple choice questions (1 mark)

CBSE 2025 · 62/1 Which of the following statements is true for westernisation? (A) The changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule (B) Westernisation does not involve the imitation of external forms of culture (C) The west did not influence Indian art and literature (D) Westernisation did not include the sub-culture of Indian intellectuals

Ans. (A) M.N. Srinivas defined westernisation as the changes in Indian society and culture resulting from over 150 years of British rule, at the levels of technology, institutions, ideology and values. It does involve imitation of external forms (dress, food), included the sub-culture of Indian intellectuals, and influenced art and literature.

CBSE 2026 · 62/1 Assertion (A): Sanskritisation operated similarly in different parts of the country. Reason (R): In regions where the non-Sanskritic were dominant, it was their influence that was stronger. (A) Both true, R explains A (B) Both true, R does not explain A (C) A true, R false (D) A false, R true

Ans. (D) A is false: Sanskritisation did not operate the same way everywhere. R is true: where non-Sanskritic castes were dominant (e.g. in Punjab culture), their influence was stronger — a process sometimes called "de-Sanskritisation".

CBSE 2024 · 62/1 The impact of Sanskritisation is many-sided. Its influence can be seen in: (A) Language only (B) Literature only (C) Drama only (D) Language, Literature, Drama

Ans. (D) Language, literature and drama — and also ideology, music, dance and ritual (M.N. Srinivas).

Long answer questions (4 marks)

CBSE 2025 · 62/1 (a) Westernisation does involve the imitation of external forms of culture. Illustrate the process of westernisation. OR (b) The varied social reform movements did have common themes. Yet there were also significant differences. Discuss.

Ans. (a) Any four:

- M.N. Srinivas: westernisation is "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule", at the levels of technology, institutions, ideology and values.
- It refers to the emergence of a westernised **sub-culture** among a minority of Indians who first came in contact with western culture — including Indian intellectuals who adopted western ways of thinking and lifestyles and supported their spread.
- There is a general spread of western cultural traits: new technology, dress, food, changes in habits (e.g. middle-class homes with TV, fridge, sofa set, dining table).
- Adoption of modern values like democracy and equality; western influence on Indian art and literature.

OR

(b) Any four differences:

- For some, concerns were confined to problems of **upper-caste, middle-class** women and men; for others, the injustices suffered by **discriminated castes** were central.
- For some, social evils arose from the **decline of the true spirit of Hinduism**; for others, caste and gender oppression was **intrinsic to the religion**.
- Muslim reformers actively debated polygamy and purdah. (Common themes: use of new ideas of liberalism, new media and organisations, and a critique of tradition.)

CBSE 2026 · 62/1 "A considerable part of ritual in India has a direct reference to the pursuit of secular ends. Rituals have secular dimensions as distinct from secular goals." Justify with the help of suitable examples.

4

Ans. Rituals have **secular dimensions** besides their religious meaning:

- They give men and women occasions for **socialising** with peers and superiors (weddings, festivals).
- They are used to **show off the family's wealth**, clothing and jewellery.
- In recent decades the **economic, political and status** dimensions of ritual have become increasingly conspicuous.
- Example: the number of cars lined up outside a wedding house and the VIPs who attend are an index of the household's standing in the community. Rituals are also performed for secular goals such as passing an exam, getting a job or recovering from illness.

CBSE 2024 · 62/1 The question of the status of women in modern India arose as part of the nineteenth-century middle-class social reform movements. The nature of these movements varied from region to region. Explain any two social reform movements that addressed the women's question.

4

Ans. Any two (2 marks each):

- **Raja Rammohun Roy (Bengal):** founded the Brahmo Samaj (1828); led the campaign against **sati**, the first women's issue taken up; his ideas mixed western rationality with an assertion of Indian tradition (he cited the shastras).
- **M.G. Ranade (Bombay Presidency):** led the **widow remarriage** movement; his writings "The Texts of the Hindu Law on the Lawfulness of the Remarriage of Widows" and "Vedic Authorities for Widow Marriage" gave shastric sanction for remarriage.
- **Jyotiba Phule:** founded the Satyashodhak Samaj ("truth seeking"); attacked both caste and gender discrimination; with Savitribai Phule opened schools for girls.
- **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan:** reform within Islam; wanted girls educated within the home, with religious principles, housekeeping, handicrafts and child-rearing.

CBSE 2024 · 62/1 Which sociologist coined the term Sanskritisation? Differentiate between Sanskritisation and de-Sanskritisation.

4

Ans. The term was coined by **M.N. Srinivas**.

Sanskritisation: a process by which members of a (usually middle or lower) caste try to raise their social status by adopting the ritual, domestic and social practices of a caste of higher status (e.g. giving up meat and liquor, wearing the sacred thread).

De-Sanskritisation: in regions where non-Sanskritic castes were dominant, it was their influence that

was stronger; people imitated the dominant non-Sanskritic culture instead (e.g. in Punjab, in the third quarter of the 19th century the Persian influence was dominant).

Practice set

1. Name Saberwal's three aspects of the modern framework.
2. Who opened the first school for women in Pune?
3. What is ijtehad?
4. Define Sanskritisation.
5. What is de-Sanskritisation?
6. Give Srinivas' definition of westernisation.
7. What is the secularisation of caste?
8. Give one secular dimension of ritual.

Answers

- Ans.** 1. Modes of communication, forms of organisation, nature of ideas.
2. Jotiba Phule.
 3. Free enquiry in Islam (stressed by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan).
 4. Lower castes adopting the customs and lifestyle of higher (twice-born) castes.
 5. Stronger influence of dominant non-Sanskritic castes in a region.
 6. Changes from over 150 years of British rule at the levels of technology, institutions, ideology and values.
 7. Caste acting as a political pressure group rather than a religious institution.
 8. Socialising; showing off wealth (cars, VIPs at weddings).

Multiple choice: 15 MCQs

1. The 19th-century reforms combined western liberalism with:
(a) feudal law (b) Marxism (c) a new look at traditional literature (d) colonial law only
2. Rammohun Roy attacked:
(a) sati (b) polygamy (c) purdah (d) dowry
3. The All-India Muslim Ladies Conference was founded in:
(a) 1868 (b) 1885 (c) 1947 (d) 1914
4. The orthodox body that opposed sati reform was the:
(a) Arya Samaj (b) Dharma Sabha (c) Prarthana Samaj (d) Brahmo Samaj
5. The term Sanskritisation was coined by:
(a) G.S. Ghurye (b) M.N. Srinivas (c) Rajni Kothari (d) A.R. Desai
6. In Punjab the dominant cultural influence until the late 19th century was:
(a) Sanskritic (b) Buddhist (c) British (d) Persian
7. Sanskritisation brings mainly:
(a) positional change (b) revolution (c) structural change (d) secularisation
8. Adopting upper-caste rites led to replacing bride-price with:
(a) polygamy (b) widow remarriage (c) dowry (d) divorce

9. Westernisation, per Srinivas, resulted from British rule of over: describes:

(a) 500 years (b) 50 years (c) 300 years (d) 150 years

(a) modernity (b) tradition (c) caste (d) Sanskritisation

10. Kerala's Thiyyas show that westernisation was:

(a) only for upper castes (b) not only for upper castes (c) rejected (d) religious

13. Modernity's assumptions were listed by:

(a) Srinivas (b) Rudolph and Rudolph (c) Saberwal (d) Kothari

11. The 1870 family portrait of Krishna Menon was painted by:

(a) Abanindranath Tagore (b) Bankimchandra (c) Ravi Varma (d) Chandu Menon

14. Cars outside a wedding house reflect ritual's:

(a) sacred goals (b) purity (c) secular dimension (d) fatalism

15. "What form is caste taking under modern politics?" was asked by:

(a) Srinivas (b) Ambedkar (c) Phule (d) Rajni Kothari

1 (c) · 2 (a) · 3 (d) · 4 (b) · 5 (b) · 6 (d) · 7 (a) · 8 (c) · 9 (d) · 10 (b) · 11 (c) · 12 (a) · 13 (b) · 14 (c) · 15 (d)

Assertion-Reason (5)

(a) Both A and R true, R explains A. (b) Both true, R does not explain A. (c) A true, R false. (d) A false, R true.

1. A: Reform ideas spread quickly across India. R: Printing press, telegraph and railways sped up communication.

2. A: Westernisation always brings democratic values. R: Westernisation involves imitation of external forms.

3. A: Sanskritisation has been criticised as gendered. R: It led to seclusion of women and dowry.

4. A: Caste is disappearing in modern politics. R: Caste associations make demands on the state.

5. A: Sanskritisation operated similarly everywhere. R: Where non-Sanskritic castes dominated, their influence was stronger.

Key: 1 (a) · 2 (d) · 3 (a) · 4 (d) · 5 (d)

- Last-night summary:** structure vs culture; reform: sati, child marriage, widow remarriage, caste; modern context + mix of ideas (Roy, Ranade, Sir Syed's ijtehad, Viresalingam); Saberwal: communication (press, telegraph, railways; Keshav Sen, Pandita Ramabai), organisation (Brahmo, Arya Samaj, Muslim Ladies Conference 1914), ideas (education; Phule's school; pre-Aryan vs Aryan). Differences: upper-caste vs discriminated castes; decline of Hinduism vs intrinsic oppression; polygamy and purdah (Jahanara Shah Nawaz); Dharma Sabha.
- Sanskritisation (Srinivas): low caste adopts twice-born customs; many-sided; regional (de-Sanskritisation; Persian Punjab); needs economic/political rise; obstacles (Kumud Pawade); criticism: positional not structural, superiority of upper castes, justifies inequality, gendered (seclusion, dowry), erodes Dalit culture; backward-class movement, Dalit pride. Westernisation: 150 years, sub-culture of intellectuals + general traits; external forms ≠ values; Ravi Varma; generational conflict; Thiyyas, Nagas.
- Modernisation: Rudolph and Rudolph (universal, science, individual, choice, mastery, achieved identity, separate work); colonial context; Phule's jibe. Secularisation: decline of religion; indicators; but religious revival;

rituals' secular ends and dimensions (cars, VIPs); secularisation of caste — pressure groups; Kothari.

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