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TALIBAN ATTACK ON BAMMIYAN VALLEY – AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract:

This paper will mainly focus on the cultural civilization of the Bamiyan Valley, the diverse tribal population residing in Bamiyan Valley, and the millennia of civilizations that survived in Bamiyan Valley during the range of many rulers. Sections of the paper will illustrate the changes that came to Afghanistan mainly in the destruction of the globally renowned two colossal Buddha of Bamiyan Cultural Heritage site after Taliban came to power in 2001. Also the researcher shall illustrate briefly a historical background of the civilization in the Bamiyan Valley from 3rd BCE till 20th century and the key pointers on the situation of the people in Bamiyan Valley regarding their unsettled livelihood, financial instabilities, religious disputes, inequality treatments given to women and the impacts of Taliban rules, to the non-Islamic residents of Bamiyan Valley that is driving the population to the status of homeless people during the rise of Taliban. This paper outlines UNESCO's approach and the initiatives taken to preserving Afghanistan's cultural heritage, with a specific focus on the Bamiyan site while making the locality aware of how priceless those sculptures were. The researcher uses secondary data for the information in this paper.

Keywords: Bamiyan Valley, Cultural Heritage site, aged old civilisation of Bamiyan culture, Taliban attack, Monumental Colossal Buddha statues, UNESCO.

INTRODUCTION:

Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan has dated back from 5th century CE. During the prehistoric time of Bamiyan Valley, many nomads and wanderers cross Bamiyan valley and stays in the caves to take shelters. Many ancient caves drawing have been found in the Bamiyan regions, and skulls and tools are also found deep inside the caves indicating the past events of the wanderers. Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan has gone through many different eras of historical reforms and influence by many rulers with their art and culture. Artefacts typical of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages have been found in Afghanistan, Which made many scholars and

archaeologists to believed that the Bamiyan civilization might be a colony to the Indus valley civilisation.



Source: thedailygurdian.com



Source: underlying map Google

Bamiyan Valley is situated in the central Afghanistan with a diverse population of many tribes. Bamiyan Valley is approximately 130 km (80 miles) northwest of Kabul, the country's capital. The main river, Bamiyan River flows through the valley nourishing the fertility of the land and sustaining the local communities. This region has a profound historical and cultural significance, renowned for its magnificent landscapes, ancient artefacts, and world known remarkable Buddhist heritage. Surrounded by the Hindu Kush mountain range, Bamiyan Valley serves as crossroads of civilization and a testament to the rich tapestry of Afghan history. This valley has been inhabited for millennia, well known as the centre of commerce and Buddhism. Surrounded by majestic sandstone cliffs, haven of natural beauty, and two colossal Buddha being part of numerous archaeological structures offers a breath-taking site for tourists as well as took the interest of UNESCO world Heritage Committee.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. Assessing of geographical History of the Buddha of Bamiyan in Afghanistan by Mohammad

Esmil Saddiqi, Feraidoon Ekhlās, Fahima Ramesh (2019) - Afghanistan ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1979 and has since proposed 9 sites for inclusion on the World Heritage List. In June 2002, the Archaeological Remains and Minaret of Jam nomination was re-evaluated and added to the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger. This marked the first time a cultural heritage site in Afghanistan received international recognition under the 1972 UNESCO Convention. In the Bamiyan Valley, two monumental Buddha statues were carved around 1700 years ago. Standing at 53 and 38 meters tall, the larger statue was the tallest standing Buddha in the world. Unfortunately, the Taliban destroyed these statues in March 2001. Despite this, a team from ETH Zurich managed to digitally reconstruct the Great Buddha, providing a foundation for potential physical reconstruction. This study presents the findings of a 3D reconstruction of the statue using various photogrammetric techniques and algorithms on three different data sets. The destruction of the Buddhas in 2001 by the Taliban sparked international outrage, with conflicting reasons given for the act, ranging from protest against international aid to religious iconoclasm.

2. UNESCO's mandate and activities for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan's cultural Heritage by C. Manhart - Afghanistan, located at a crucial intersection along the ancient Silk Road, has served as a melting pot of cultures throughout history. Its rich cultural legacy is a testament to its encounters with Achaemenid Persia, Alexandrian Greece, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Notable treasures include the Kanishka/Zoroastrian site of Surkh Kotal, the ninth-century Nine Domes Mosque of Haji Piyada, the twelfth-century Minaret of Jam, and the walled city of Herat with its various architectural marvels. Unfortunately, the destruction of the fourth and fifth-century Buddha statues in the Bamiyan Valley by the Taliban in 2001 marked a significant loss to Afghanistan's heritage. The current state of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, which has suffered greatly due to war and civil unrest over the past two decades, can be described as a cultural catastrophe. Efforts by the United Nations, UNESCO, UNOCHA, and various non-governmental organizations have been on-going to protect and preserve Afghanistan's cultural treasures.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. Understanding the historical civilisations of the Bamiyan valley.
2. Analysing the ideological motivation behind Taliban's targeting of cultural heritage site.
3. Assessing the impacts of the destructions on the local community, cultural preservation efforts, and global heritage awareness.
4. Examining the international relations and responses to the destruction of Buddha including cultural repercussions.
5. Identifying lessons learnt from the Bamiyan incidents for the protection of cultural Heritage in conflict zone.

RESEARCH GAP:

The researcher could not find an empirical study conducted on the Bamiyan valley which is located in the central part of Afghanistan and hence no substantial data or research work is available. To justify the plight of people of the region particularly the researcher wants to put light on the social status of the local inhabitants whose cultural identity, economic stature and the deterioration in their social upbringing is caused by the local terrorist groups and hence the article follows with a secondary study to determine the social structure of the people and society in the Bamiyan region.

METHODOLOGY:

This research methodology involves the secondary data analysis of Bamiyan valley. In 2001, the Taliban's attack on the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan was part of their broader campaign to control territory and enforce their strict interpretation of Islamic law. The attack on Bamiyan Valley included conventional military tactics such as artillery bombardment and ground assaults. Additionally, the Taliban targeted cultural and historical sites, including the ancient Buddha statues carved into the cliffs of Bamiyan, which they eventually destroyed. This attack was emblematic of the Taliban's disregard for cultural heritage and their willingness to use force to achieve their objectives.

Following the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in 2001, UNESCO launched several initiatives to preserve and safeguard the cultural heritage of the Bamiyan Valley, which includes documentation and assessment of the damage caused by the Taliban's actions, Preservation planning, Conservation and Monitoring, Cultural Tourism Promotion, etc. Overall, UNESCO's initiatives aimed to preserve the cultural significance of the Bamiyan Valley and ensure that future generations could continue to appreciate its historical legacy despite the damage inflicted by the Taliban.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Taliban attack on Bamiyan valley targeting the cultural Heritage site which stood for millennia?
2. What were the immediate and long term socio-cultural impacts of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues on the local communities and Afghanistan as a whole?
3. How did Taliban's actions in the Bamiyan valley contribute to shaping global perceptions of cultural Heritage preservation and protection of cultural sites in conflict zone?
4. What are the on-going efforts, challenges, and opportunity for reconstruction and preservation initiatives in the Bamiyan valley, and how do they intersect with broader development goals in Afghanistan?
5. What lessons can be learned from the Taliban's attack on Bamiyan valley?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Bamiyan Valley, located in central Afghanistan, has a rich history dating back to ancient

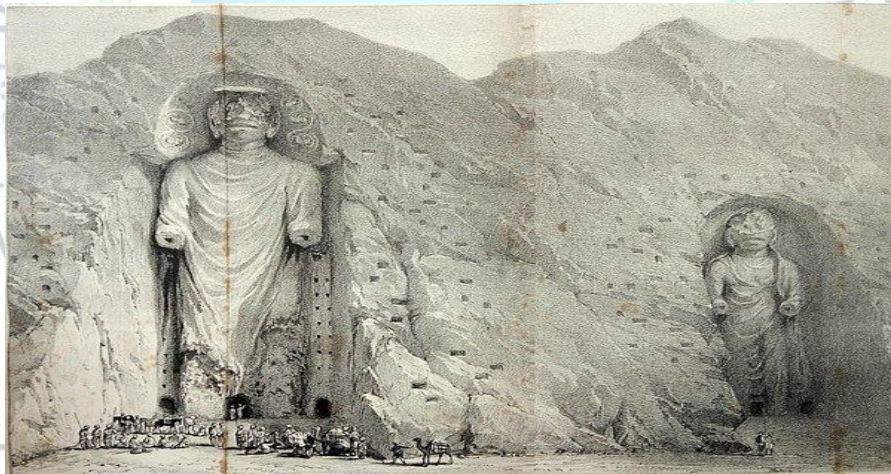
times. Here's a brief historical background from 3 BCE until 20th century:

- 3rd Century BCE: The earliest known settlement in the Bamiyan Valley dates back to this period, during the time of the Achaemenid Empire. Bamiyan served as a crucial hub along the Silk Road, connecting Central Asia with the Indian subcontinent.



The silk road, source: Wikipedia

- 1st Century CE: Buddhism began to flourish in the Bamiyan Valley during this period, and monastic complexes were established in the region. The construction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues, carved into the cliffs of the valley, likely began during this time.



Picture of two colossal Buddha (55m & 38m respectively), source: quora

- 3rd to 7th Centuries CE: Bamiyan became a prominent centre of Buddhist learning and pilgrimage, with monasteries, stupas, and other religious structures dotting the landscape. The Bamiyan Buddha statues, standing at 55 and 38 meters tall, respectively, were among the largest standing Buddha statues in the world during this period.
- 9th to 12th Centuries CE: Bamiyan continued to thrive as a center of Buddhism and cultural exchange. The region saw the construction of additional Buddhist monasteries, as well as the development of unique artistic styles blending influences from Central Asia, India, and Persia.



Pictures of mural on the caves and ceilings of Bamiyan valley, source: wordpress.com, Wikipedia, world history archive

- 13th Century CE: The Mongol invasion of Central Asia led to the decline of Buddhism in the region, and Bamiyan's significance as a religious centre waned. However, the valley remained a cultural crossroads, with various dynasties and empires exerting influence over the area.
- 19th Century CE: Bamiyan regained some prominence as European explorers and archaeologists began to rediscover the region's ancient Buddhist heritage. The valley became a subject of fascination for scholars and travellers interested in Central Asian history and culture.
- 20th Century CE: Bamiyan remained relatively isolated until the 20th century, when Afghanistan underwent significant political and social changes. In March 2001, the Taliban regime, which controlled Afghanistan at the time, carried out the infamous destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues, sparking international condemnation. The act was seen as a symbol of the Taliban's extreme interpretation of Islam and their disregard for cultural heritage. The region became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003, recognizing its cultural and historical significance.



Before & after image of the Buddha in Bamiyan valley, source: the collector

So, Bamiyan Valley has a rich and diverse history of thousands of spans. It has went through many rise and fall of ancient civilisations, the valley witnesses dusk and dawn of human history that imprints a legacy of cultural heritage and architectural marvels. The history of human

habitation in Bamiyan valley dates back to prehistoric times, with archaeological evidence as early as Palaeolithic era. Nomadic tribes and early agricultural communities settled in this valley because of its abundant natural resources, favourable climate and fertile land.

During the peak time of Silk Road trade route, Bamiyan valley emerged as the crossroads for trade and commerce between East and West, since it's a place where the east meets west. Many valuable material were trade across this land which enriched the valley inhabitants and fuelling its prosperity. This trade route also adds the advantage to exchange ideas, beliefs and artistic influence which brought a diverse array of cultures to Bamiyan people. One of such remarkable highlights of such advantages was the association with Buddhism. From 3rd century BCE, the region became the centre of Buddhist worshipping and learning that attracts monks, scholars, pilgrims and tourists from across Buddhist world. Monastic complexes were established in this valley which housed thousands of monks from worldwide, serving as a hub of religious activities.

The Gandhara region was a center of cultural influence and hosted numerous Buddhist missionaries during the reign of King Ashoka of India (3rd century BC). In the 1st century AD, Gandhara maintained contact with Rome under the rule of the Kushan Empire, but there was also the influence of Hellenistic and Sassanian art. In interpreting Buddhist legends, the Gandhara School borrowed many motifs and techniques from classical Roman art. The basic iconography remained Indian in association with the Mathura school, but developed independently in. In this way, Gandhara School was able to achieve its unique artistic expression and distinguish itself from other similar sites. The Bamiyan Valley has some of its most important expressions. The 55 meter tall Buddha statue was the tallest in the world at

Buddhist monasteries were repurposed as mosques, and Islamic architecture began to emerge in the landscape with the spread of Islam in the region during the 7th century CE, Bamiyan Valley underwent a period of transformation. It marked as a new chapter in the valley's history, bringing new change in architecture, religious practices and cultural traditions. The valley went through gradual conversion of old faiths to new faiths. Mosques were established and Islamic religious practices began to take root in the valley. However, the process of conversion was not instantaneous, and the elements of Buddhism continue to coexist with Islam.

Whereas, the Buddhist culture in Bamiyan valley was deeply influence by the emerging Islamic religious practices. Many of the Buddhist monasteries and temples in Bamiyan were restructured to serve the Islamic religious functions. The famous Bamiyan monastery, once a centre of Buddhist learning was converted into mosque, reflecting the cultural and religious syncretism of the period. As well as Islamic architectural elements were blend into Buddhist artworks creating a new unique Buddhist-Islamic influences.

The Islamic period in Bamiyan valley imprints the emergence of new artistic style and

techniques influence by Islamic traditions. While Buddhist art continues, the Islamic art forms began to appear in the valley's architecture and decorative arts, giving a vibrant exchange of ideas, cultures and artistic traditions. Despite the passage of time and challenges faced by the inhabitants of Bamiyan valley, the Islamic period left an incredible and significant contribution to the richness and diversity of its artistic heritage.

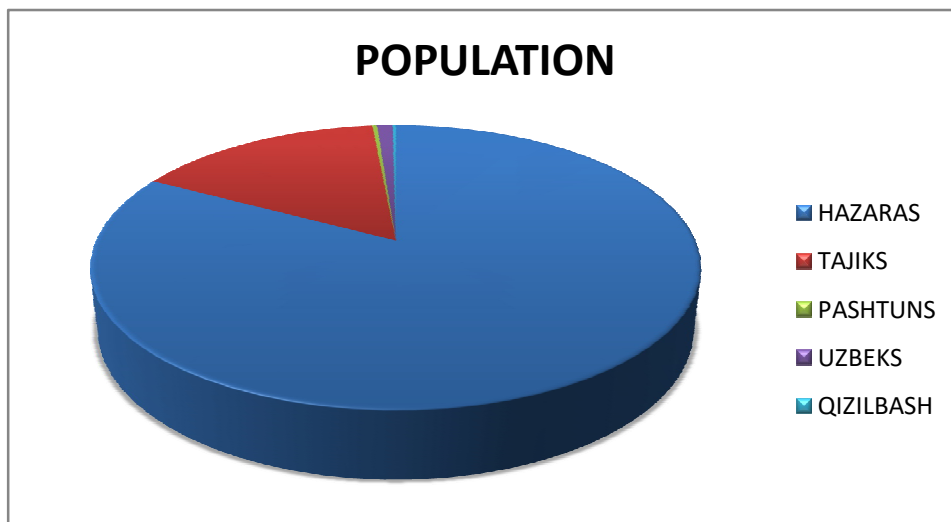
Throughout its history, the Bamiyan Valley has been a testament to the diverse cultures and religions that have flourished in Central Asia. Despite the destruction of its iconic Buddha statues, Bamiyan continues to hold significance as a symbol of resilience and the enduring legacy of ancient civilizations.

DEMOGRAPHY OF BAMIIAN VALLEY:

Bamiyan valley is a province of population of approximate 496000 as of December 2020, comprising of various ethnic groups, each of them contributing to the rich cultural fabric and heritage site. The valley is primarily dominated by the Hazaras ethnic group followed by Tajiks, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, and Qizilbash which also resides in the valley. Bamiyan can be reached from Kabul by the Kabul-Bamiyan highway, via the province of Wardak, via Parwan, or via passenger services to Bamiyan's airport. Bamiyan is located in the central highlands' region and just 140 kilometres north of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. This province rises up at an altitude of 2,500 meters from the Bamiyan River lines and 2,900 meters above the standard sea level.

Bamiyan valley is located in between the Koh-i-Baba and the Hindu Kush mountain ranges, serves as the province's capital, which has another seven districts, each led by a district governor.





1. THE HAZARAS;

The hazaras are the largest ethnic group in Bamiyan Valley, dominating a significant portion of the Bamiyan population. They are predominant of Mongol descendants, and they are known for their distinct cultural traditions which include music, dance and cuisines. Hazaras not only played a significant role in shaping the cultural and social landscapes of Bamiyan but also takes a pivotal role in shaping the political landscapes of the valley. Hazaras consists of 83.9% of the total population as of 2021-22 census report. This 83.9% of Hazara is sub-divided into 81% Shiites, 10% Syyids, 1.1% Ismallis, 0.9% Sunni Tatar hazara.

2. THE TAJIKS:

The Tajiks also forms a notable portion of Bamiyan Valley's population. They are an Iranic ethnic group and primarily concentrated in the northern parts of the valley. This certain ethnic group comprises of approximately some 15.9% of the Bamiyan population. They have their own unique language, culture and traditions which contribute to the diverse cultural demography of Bamiyan Valley.

3. THE PASHTUNS:

Pashtuns also known as Pakhtuns or Pathans are nomadic, pastoral, Eastern Iranic ethnic groups. They constitute a smaller percentage of population as compare to Hazaras and Tajiks. Regardless their small population, they too have their own distinct cultural identity, language, and customs. They are primarily found in the southern regions of the valley.

4. THE UZBEKS AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS:

In addition to Hazaras, Tajiks, and Pashtuns, Bamiyan Valley is also a home to smaller communities of Uzbeks, Qizilbash, and other ethnic groups. These smaller communities also contribute to the cultural diversity of the valley, with their own culture, language, customs, etc.

Despite the presence of various ethnic groups, the Bamiyan Valley was known for its cultural diversity and harmony. This different ethnic groups coexists peacefully sharing traditions, customs,

languages, art and culture, etc

THE RISE OF TALIBAN IN BAMMIYAN VALLEY AFGHANISTAN:

The rise of the Taliban in Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan, was part of the broader ascent of the Taliban movement across the country during the 1990s. The Taliban emerged as a significant political and military force in Afghanistan, eventually seizing control of the majority of the country, including Bamiyan Valley in the late 1990s.

The Taliban movement originated in the early 1990s in the southern provinces of Afghanistan, primarily populated by Pashtun tribes. The movement emerged amidst the chaos and instability that followed the withdrawal of soviet forces from Afghanistan and the subsequent civil war between rival Mujahideen factions.

Bamiyan valley, with its diverse population and historical significance, became a battleground for various factions vying for control during the Afghan Civil war. In 1995, the Taliban launched an offensive to capture the valley, ultimately seizing control of the region and imposing their strict interpretation of Islamic law.

The Taliban's takeover of Bamiyan Valley resulted in significant changes for the local population. The movement's strict enforcement of its interpretation of Islamic law, known for its harsh and repressive measures, affected all aspects of life in the valley, including education, cultural, and religious practices.

One of the most infamous acts associated with the Taliban's rule in Bamiyan Valley was the destruction of the ancient Buddha statues carved into the cliffs of the valley. In March 2001, despite international outcry and condemnation, the Taliban systematically destroyed the colossal Buddha's statues, which had stood as a symbol of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage for centuries. This news complete shock the world in the spring of 2001.



Source: Wikimedia

The destruction of the Buddha statues was seen as a symbol of the Taliban's intolerance of other religious beliefs and disregard for Afghanistan's diverse cultural heritage. Its further isolated the Taliban regime internationally and intensified opposition to Taliban in power and ruling within Afghanistan.

TALIBAN'S IMPACT ON BAMBIYAN VALLEY:

The rise of the Taliban has significant impacts on non-Islamic population in Bamiyan Valley. The conditions of non-Islamic residents including Hazaras and other minority groups, under Taliban rule was marked by repression, violence and displacement.

1. PERSECUTION AND DISCRIMINATION: The Taliban's strict interpretation of Sunni Islam led to the persecution and discrimination of the non-Sunni Muslim populations, including Hazaras, who practice Shia Islam. The Hazaras in Bamiyan Valley were targeted by Taliban for their religious beliefs and ethnic identity, facing violence, forced conversions, and restrictions on their cultural practices and religious rituals.

2. CULTURAL SUPPRESSION: Under Taliban rule, non-Islamic cultural practices and traditions were suppressed and marginalised. Hazara cultural expression including music, dance, and language, were discouraged or prohibited, as they were seen as incompatible with the Taliban's strict interpretation of Islamic law. This cultural suppression further marginalized with the other non-Islamic population in Bamiyan Valley, limiting their ability to express their identity and heritage.

3. ECONOMIC HARDSHIP: The Taliban's policies and actions, including restrictions on education, employment, and economic opportunities, disproportionately affected the non-Islamic residents in Bamiyan valley. Hazaras, in particular, faced harsh economic crisis as they are marginalized from government activities, further exacerbating poverty and inequality within the community.

4. FORCE DISPLACEMENT: Many non-Islamic residents were forced to flee their homes in Bamiyan valley to escape Taliban persecution and violence. The Taliban's brutal tactics including targeted attacks on minority communities and widespread human rights abuses, created a climate of fear and insecurity leading to mass displacement and internal migration within Afghanistan.

5. DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: The Taliban's destruction of ancient Buddha statues in Bamiyan Valley in 2001, along with the targeting of other religious sites, further marginalized non-Islamic population and undermined their cultural heritage. WHY? Maybe, the Taliban, supposedly acting on the instructions of their Wahhabi guarantors in Saudi Arabia, destroyed the statues in March 2001 as a way of sanctifying the land from the acts of apostates. The main ideal of such actions, other than the pure financial earnings to be accrued from the destruction of heritage site, was to remove any signs of any aged cultural existence. This allowed a rewriting of history, suggesting that the raiders had "brought" civilization to the area.. This brought a worldly

criticism on Taliban in power.

6. EXPLOITATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS: Women and girls were particularly affected, as the Taliban imposed strict gender segregation and enforced draconian restrictions on their freedom and rights. Imposing band on religious practices other than Islamic religion, public humiliations and executions of non-Islamic believers, other religious idols were prohibited to worship during the time of Taliban in power.

ECONOMY CONDITION OF BAMBIAN VALLEY:

Economy of Bamiyan valley before 2001 (the attack of Taliban) -

The economy of Bamiyan valley was primarily based on agriculture, livestock farming, limited trade and commerce and also tourism. With the valley fertile soil and favourable climate conditions, agriculture serves as the mainstay of livelihood of the local population. Mainly wheat, barley, potatoes, and other seasonal crops provide sustenance for the local residents and serving as a source of income through local trade markets.

Since Bamiyan is in mountain range, livestock framing with pastoralism plays a significant role in supporting the livelihoods of the residents of the valley. Sheep, Goats and cattle rearing are the important components of livestock framing. Animal husbandry provides meat and dairy product for the local consumptions and serves as a source of income in the local market.

Trade and commerce were limited due to region's remote location and disadvantages of transportation and infrastructural development. However, the valley has an age old ancient trade routes, such as Silk Road, this facilitates some level of economic exchange, with goods such as textiles, handicrafts, and livestock trades with the neighbouring regions.

Tourism also plays a modest role in attracting visitors from around the world, with the region's cultural and historical attractions, including the colossal two standing Buddha with various other statues and first ancient oil paintings, the ancient monasteries and so on. However, the tourism was underdeveloped comparing to the other part of Afghanistan with limited hotels and transportations.

Economy of Bamiyan Valley after 2001 -

After the great destruction of the Buddha statues and overthrow of the Taliban regime, the economy of the Bamiyan Valley went through significant changes. The post-2001 period emphasise the efforts to rebuild, revitalize the region, with a focus on infrastructure development, economic diversification, and promotion of tourism.

International aids and investments poured into Bamiyan valley, supporting reconstruction projects, such as restoration of historical sites, constructions of roads and bridges, and improvement of agricultural infrastructure. These efforts stimulates economic growth, create employment opportunities, improving living standards for the local populations.

Although Agriculture remained a key pillar of the economy even after 2001, however with initiatives to modernized farming practices, increase productivity, and expand markets excess for agriculture products. Additionally, effort were made to promote alternative livelihoods, such as small-scale industry, handicraft production, and eco-tourism, in order to diversify the economy and reduce dependence on agriculture.

The tourism industry experienced resurgence after 2001, with Bamiyan valley emerging for domestic and international travellers. Tourist infrastructure, including hostels, restaurants, and tour operators, expended to accommodate the growing number of visitors drawn to the valley's cultural and natural attraction.

UNESCO INTERVENTION IN BAMMIYAN CRISIS:

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, played a significant role in responding to the destruction of cultural heritage in Bamiyan Valley, particularly the demolition of the ancient Buddha by the Taliban in 2001. UNESCO'S intervention aims on certain areas in preserving nd protecting the cultural heritage of Bamiyan Valley.

1. CONDEMNATION AND ADVOCACY: Immediately following the destruction of the Buddha statues, UNESCO issued strong condemnations of the Taliban's actions and called for international solidarity to safeguard Afghanistan's cultural heritage. UNESCO's Director-General and various member states spoke out against the destruction, emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural diversity and heritage for future generations.

2. EMERGENCY MEASUREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT: In response to the crisis, UNESCO deployed experts to Bamiyan Valley to assess the extent of the damage and identify emergency measures to mitigate further destruction. These assessments provided crucial information for planning and implementing restoration and preservation efforts in the valley.



(safe-guarding the Bamiyan site Phase III)

3. REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION: UNESCO worked closely with the afghan government, local communities, and international partners to develop comprehensive rehabilitation and restoration plans for Bamiyan Valley. These efforts included the stabilisation of the Buddha niches, documentation of cultural artefacts, and training programs for local heritage professionals.



Remembering the Buddha of Bamiyan, source: Afghanistan.asia-news.com

4. CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: UNESCO supported capacity-building initiatives aimed at empowering local communities to take an active role in the preservation and management of their cultural heritage. This included training programs for heritage conservationists, workshops on cultural heritage protection, and community engagement activities to raise awareness and promote cultural appreciation.

5. WORLD HERITAGE STATUS AND PROTECTION: Bamiyan Valley was inscribed on the UNESCO world heritage List in 2003, recognising its outstanding universal value and the need for international protection and preservation. UNESCO worked closely with Afghan authorities to develop management plans and conservation strategies for the World Heritage site, ensuring its long term safeguarding and sustainability.

6. INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION AND SUPPORT: UNESCO facilitated international cooperation and support for the preservation of Bamiyan Valley, mobilizing resources and expertise from member states, partner organisations, and the global community. This collaboration helped to strengthen efforts to protect cultural heritage and promote sustainable development in the valley.



Restoring the relics by scholars in Afghanistan, source: pic from global time

RESEARCH FINDINGS:



Source: landscape of Bamiyan valley from art newspaper

From this particular research, “The Taliban's attack on the Bamiyan Valley in 2001”, specifically the destruction of the ancient Buddha statues, has been extensively documented and analysed by various researchers and organizations. Here are some key findings from research on the Taliban's attack on the Bamiyan Valley in 2001:

Motivations and Ideology: Researchers have delved into the ideological motivations behind the Taliban's decision to destroy the Bamiyan Buddha statues. This includes examining the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law and their views on idolatry and religious iconography.

Cultural Destruction: Studies have documented the extent of the damage caused by the Taliban's

actions, including the destruction of the two large Buddha statues and other cultural heritage sites in the Bamiyan Valley. Researchers have assessed the impact of this cultural destruction on local communities and Afghanistan's cultural heritage as a whole.

International Response: Research has examined the international response to the Taliban's attack on the Bamiyan Valley, including diplomatic efforts, condemnation from the global community, and calls for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones

Reconstruction Debate: Scholars have explored the on-going debate surrounding the reconstruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues. This includes discussions on the feasibility of reconstruction efforts, ethical considerations, and the implications for preserving cultural heritage.

Heritage Preservation: Research has highlighted the importance of heritage preservation efforts in the aftermath of the Taliban's attack. This includes initiatives by UNESCO and other organizations to document, assess, and safeguard cultural heritage in the Bamiyan Valley and other areas affected by conflict.

Impact on Tourism and Development: Studies have assessed the impact of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues on tourism and development in the region. This includes examining the role of cultural tourism in promoting sustainable development and preserving Afghanistan's cultural heritage.

Overall, research findings on the Taliban's attack on the Bamiyan Valley in 2001 provide valuable insights into the complex intersections of ideology, conflict, cultural heritage, and international relations. These findings contribute to broader discussions on the importance of protecting cultural heritage in times of conflict and the role of the international community in preserving the world's cultural heritage sites.

SUGGESTIONS:

By examining today's contemporary issues through the lens of the Taliban's attack on Bamiyan Valley in 2001, researchers, policymakers, and advocates can gain valuable insights into the complexities of cultural destruction, extremism, and efforts to protect and preserve our shared cultural heritage.

1. Protection of cultural Heritage: Analysing the on-going conflicts and instances of cultural heritage, it is highly essential to come up with potential strategies for protecting the cultural heritage site in conflict zones.

2. Extremism and Ideological warfare: Exploring the role of extremist ideologies in fuelling the violence and conflict in both contemporary and historical context, use of cultural heritage destruction as a tool of ideological warfare and propaganda, and assess the implications for global security and stability.

3. International Response and Responsibility: Evaluate the effectiveness of international efforts to

respond to cultural destruction and protect cultural heritage sites. Assess the role of organizations like UNESCO and the United Nations in promoting awareness, advocacy, and action to safeguard cultural heritage in conflict-affected areas.

4. Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Tolerance: Examine the impact of religious extremism on interfaith relations and religious tolerance, both within conflict zones and globally. Explore initiatives and dialogue efforts aimed at promoting understanding, respect, and cooperation among different religious and cultural communities.

5. Humanitarian Crisis and Cultural Identity: Consider the broader humanitarian consequences of cultural destruction, including displacement, loss of identity, and psychological trauma. Investigate the intersectionality of cultural heritage preservation with human rights, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

6. Digital Preservation and Technology: Investigate the role of digital technologies and innovative approaches in documenting, preserving, and reconstructing cultural heritage sites. Explore initiatives such as 3D modelling, virtual reality, and digital archives as tools for cultural preservation and education in conflict-affected regions.

CONCLUSION:

The Taliban attack on cultural heritage site in Bamiyan valley, coupled up with their inhuman treatment of non-Islamic residents, stands a dark chapter in the Afghanistan's history. The destruction of ancient Buddha sculpture in 2001 was not only a loss Afghanistan but also a tragic blow to the humanity's shared cultural heritage. The Taliban's targeting non-Islamic populations through persecution, discrimination, violence, public humiliations, and exploitation of minority rights, further exacerbated the suffering of vulnerable communities in Bamiyan Valley.

In response to these atrocities, UNESCO's intervention played a crucial role in preserving and protecting the cultural heritage of Bamiyan valley. Through condemnation, advocacy and on the ground initiatives, UNESCO mobilized international support to mitigate the destruction, rehabilitate damaged sites, and empower local communities to safeguard their heritage. By inscribing Bamiyan Valley on the World heritage List and implementing conservation measures, UNESCO helped ensure that the valley's rich cultural legacy would be preserved for future generations.

However, the scars of the Taliban's actions continue to linger in Bamiyan valley regardless the UNESCO intervention to provide the essential supports. The impacts of cultural destruction and human rights abuses cannot be erased overnight, and on-going efforts are needed to address the lasting effects on affected communities and promote reconciliation, tolerance, and respect for diversity in Afghanistan. The Taliban attack on cultural heritage sites and the inhuman treatment of non-Islamic residents in Bamiyan Valley underscore the importance of protecting cultural heritage and upholding human rights in times of conflicts. UNESCO's intervention serves as a beacon of

hope in the face of destruction, demonstrating the power of international cooperation and solidarity to preserve our shared heritage and promote peace and understanding in the world.

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