

## **Destruction of Bamiyan Buddha: Taliban Iconoclasm and Hazara Response**

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The destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban regime in March 2001 not only challenged the world heritage<sup>1</sup> and undermined the international law, it brought the rising threat of religious extremist groups whose target this time was cultural heritage. Annihilation of these cultural icons and treasures of mankind will remain as an Islamic iconoclastic action in the public imagination<sup>2</sup>. However, the systematic destruction of Buddhas being a modern phenomenon under the garb of an archaic iconoclasm can't be simply described as Islamic iconoclasm.

Being situated between south, west and central Asian trade routes, Bamiyan valley is marked by remarkably true trans-culturalism and the statues, stupas, viharas, shrines and monastic murals are visual portraits which narrate for cultural creolization and religious syncretism<sup>3</sup>. Not only trade and commodities but ideas were also transmitted and converged here and that made Bamiyan as a hub on the map of Asia<sup>4</sup>. Originating in the post-Gupta period, gigantism in Mahayana Buddhist art found its way to Bamiyan around 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. and remained remarkably connected to rituals in time and content<sup>5</sup>. Their identification and chronology has been a continuous debate among the art historians and it is thought that the idea of all gigantic Buddhist statues of Central Asia and China originated from the Bamiyan Valley<sup>6</sup>. To understand the Taliban's iconoclasm, a comprehensive review of Islamic iconoclasm and its comparison with the Taliban's action is essential which this paper began with. This paper then proceeds to argue the possible motivations behind this vandalism. Being home to Hazara<sup>7</sup> ethnic community in origin who speak Hazaragi dialect of Persian and follow Shia school of Islam, the Buddhas of Bamiyan found their eternity in popular culture, a transmutation from cult to culture which has preserved them for centuries. So, the last section will focus on the Buddha's position in Hazara popular culture, the response of the Hazara community to this destruction and the plan of reconstruction.

The implacable shift from protection<sup>8</sup> to annihilation<sup>9</sup> of Buddhas by the Taliban regime and its damage to the world cultural heritage has already been studied from the art history and international law perspectives. Among them B. Flood (2002) explained the nature of Islamic iconoclasm and the distinct between cult and culture, W. Muzhda (2004) and J. Elias (2007) tried to show the impact of Al-Qaeda and connection of this act with Islamic calendar. D.

Gamboni (2002) tried to show how the monumental art works could become target instead of protection, V.S Mani (2002) and F. Francioni (2003) discussed it from the aspect of international law and the latter called it as a “*criminal juris gentium*”. Essentially, the nature of their work did not allow them to see the Buddhas from the lens of Bamiyan’s inhabitants. N. Dupree (1977) and P. Levi (1972) tried to see Hazara myths related to Valley of Dragon (Darayi Azhdar) but could not find its relation to Bamiyan statutes though the local people were aware of it. There is a major flaw in these arguments as subjective position of Buddhas in popular culture is missing. This paper seeks to bring forth this aspect of the issue.

### **Destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas: A shift from Tolerance to Hostility**

The first possible question about the Taliban iconoclastic<sup>10</sup> action of March 2001 Bamiyan could be why Islam has objected to the representational art? The answer is more or less laid in corpus of Islamic tradition and *Hadith* (Prophet’s speech) as Quran is silent in this regard. Based on their oral sources, Ibn Hisham in the book of Idols (9<sup>th</sup> CE) and Abdul Malik in biography of Prophet Muhammad (9<sup>th</sup> CE) have explained early Muslim treatment towards icons<sup>11</sup>. Removal of idols of Ka’ba was indeed rhetorical triumph of monotheism over polytheism<sup>12</sup>. Apparently, the idols, seen as false gods, had usurped the position of true God, therefore they had to be removed<sup>13</sup>. The authenticity of *Hadith* itself is disputed as the earliest written *Hadith* is not earlier than 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. So, the idea of early Muslims about figural images remains obscure<sup>14</sup>. Based on it, Flood mentioned two reasons: firstly the anthropomorphic images are “usurping divine creating power” which is specific to God (Allah) and secondly it could give room to return of Shirk<sup>15</sup>. In addition, Flood called it a “kind of pathology known as Islamic iconoclasm” but remembering the geographic provenance of Islam and its vast adaptation from Judaism he agreed that its root lies in the “inherent temperamental dislike of Semitic races for representational art”<sup>16</sup>. Basically, Islamic iconoclasm is a result of specific theological attitude which is related to the understanding of this religion. According to Quran there are no gods but God<sup>17</sup> and the accepted and perfect faith to Him is Islam<sup>18</sup>. This is a message to the Muslims and does not include the followers of other faiths. Moreover, Quran says that both Muslims and non-Muslims can live with respect and preserving their religions without repudiation of each other’s faith<sup>19</sup>. But misinterpretation of above-mentioned has created conceit superiority and legitimized accusing and targeting other religious symbols (non-Muslims in general).

Moreover, the political aspects had convinced theological impulse in many cases<sup>20</sup>. However, there were economic motivations behind iconoclasm with the aim of avoiding the expenses of building a new place for the Muslim conquerors, besides imposing the superiority of the new faith as well<sup>21</sup>. In terms of relevance, what was the medieval Muslim strategy to approach the images? According to Flood, “the medieval attitude to figuration varied from individual to individual and changed over time or with advent of new political regime with different cultural values”<sup>22</sup>. But generally it could be seen in two main ways; by re-contextualization of the image to ensure that it won't be venerated anymore and decapitation of statues and rubbing the face or drawing line crossing the throat of painted figures. Each action is deeply linked with certain time and social understanding of body. The erasure of face and decapitation which was a universal phenomenon seen in Egyptian and Christian world. This could be an act of dishonouring, elimination of identity and punishment<sup>23</sup> of images which could also be seen in Islamic iconoclasm. The mutilation of head and hands were thought to be effective treatment as effective parts of body was targeted<sup>24</sup>. Generally, the headless images are interpreted as dead images. Then the inanimate images would leave to be warning for the visitors (*Ibrat lil Nazirin*) to demonstrate their impotence and emptiness<sup>25</sup>.

While, comparing the survived evidences from medieval Muslim iconoclastic acts one can draw two categories which Flood has classified as: instrumental and expressive iconoclasm<sup>26</sup>. In the first category the action is to achieve a greater aim and it included decapitation, mutilation and defacement to render the images inanimate by depriving them of their effective parts. The expressive iconoclasm is achieved to express one's belief and is aimed to impose superiority of one on others. There are abundant instances for the earlier paradigm but it is rare to see the latter category. The medieval Muslim would not probably think about complete obliteration of representational art or religious site. In contrast to profanation and imposed iconoclasm upon others, the evidences show opulent decorated staffs with anthropomorphic images<sup>27</sup> mixed with vegetal design and calligraphy produced for the Muslim rulers over time<sup>28</sup>. In fact, the palaces were exhibitions for secular art and the mosques were places for the religious art, an internal iconolatry in contrast to external praxis. However, producing secular or religious art were tools of communicating. Arraying the mosques with particular Quranic verses, names and epithets of God would be to remind the prayers of the promised world (*Akhirat*) beyond this materialistic world. On the other hand, destroying them was also a message. Both Flood and Gamboni mentioned that the destruction or displaying the icons itself is a “powerful political message even if formed within the

context of conformity”<sup>29</sup>. Dispatching the icons from Bamiyan to Baghdad by Yaqub in 9<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>30</sup> and by Mahmud from Somanatha<sup>31</sup> to Baghdad and Mecca could be seen as deliberate political strategy to propagate his fidelity to Islam to receive religious legitimacy on the one hand and to cast his political power to the Caliph on the other. After all, the theological impulse pushed by political-economic motivation and use of rhetorical superiority based on later interpretation of Islam changed the notion of treatment of Muslims towards the figurations from tolerance to hostility.

### **Bamiyan Buddhas: From Archaic Iconoclasm to Modern Political Destruction**

While studying the old images of Buddhas one can see that the nature of disfigured faces and mutilated hands are quiet comparable to medieval Muslim iconoclastic acts. The Perso-Arabic chronicles are supporting this fact as Yaqubi, Gardizi (10<sup>th</sup> ACE)<sup>32</sup> explains about Yaqub ibn Layth expedition to Bamiyan in 870 CE and destruction of Buddhist monuments of the Valley. Based on a comparative study B. Flood argues that the faces were certainly removed in medieval era<sup>33</sup> and he rejects the dispute of metallic masks. Moreover, incorporation of stucco statue with metallic mask is unknown to Gandharan Art. This indicates that these Buddhas were exposed to medieval Muslim iconoclasm and their religious significance came to an end. However, to the Muslim residents of Khorasan, neither Buddhas were religious icons nor Bamiyan was a Buddhist centre anymore but they were cultural icons. It is worth mentioning that no medieval Islamic text has objected to the existence of these statues. Indeed their gigantism created myths about them and made them as wonders of the world for the geographers and the lovers and heroes in Persian literature<sup>34</sup>. If from the textual sources one can draw a conclusion that Islam did not object to the Buddhas of Bamiyan then how does one explain the Taliban’s destruction of these in the name of Islam? The complete obliteration of Bamiyan Buddhas as it happened is unknown to medieval Muslim iconoclasm. Cleverly, it was performed “under the cover of an archaic justification”<sup>35</sup>. The motivation behind this act has been discussed by various commentators. Reasons such as UN sanctions imposed on the regime in 2000, frustration of failure at gaining the UN recognition and a sheer and typical iconoclastic action are suggested<sup>36</sup>. Gamboni (2001)<sup>37</sup> has argued that it was used as cover to traffic the pre-Islamic artefacts to Pakistani market<sup>38</sup> and suggested internal Afghan politics related to international relationships. Similarly, Pirre (2008) argued that the ransom offered by West to purchase the

statues while Afghan people were dying out of hunger in an extreme human crisis was resented by the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda members among Taliban who disliked Taliban's diplomatic relations with the West manipulated the destruction of Buddhas<sup>39</sup>. Indeed, all these reasons motivated Taliban as their strategy seemed very precise for such vandalism but where did this idea of obliteration of Buddhas and pre-Islamic arts of Afghanistan could originate?

Psychologically, misunderstanding Islam under the influence of Wahabbism intermingled with Pashtun tribal lifestyle created megalomania and deceitful superiority among the Taliban. Consequently, they speculated themselves as true savers (*Munji*) of Islam and revivalists (*Muhyee*) of Abrahamic traditions<sup>40</sup>. This theology legitimized profanation, vengeance and eradication of not only others but even the cultural values by imposing their ideology on others<sup>41</sup>. Undoubtedly, the systematic destruction of the cultural heritage which included the pre-Islamic representational art under the name of Islamic purification<sup>42</sup> was a strategy to erase the ancient history of the country<sup>43</sup> for constructing an Islamic Emarat modelled on Saudi Arabia with Wahabbi faith and Pashtun identity. Certainly, encountering western materialism<sup>44</sup> and their veneration of cultural heritages made the Buddhas as the target.

Flood argues that we may never know what changed Taliban's decision from protection to destruction of Buddhas but he saw it as a political phenomenon rather than theological achievement<sup>45</sup>. An answer could be the political constraints and UN sanctions, ideology and influence of Al-Qaeda on Taliban and Pakistani<sup>46</sup> fundamentalist groups could influence Taliban's policy as they constantly received financial and manpower support from Pakistan<sup>47</sup>. To justify their vandalism and show that they are successor of historical idol breakers, they used the historical dialogues of the famous idol-breaker Mahmud of Ghazna<sup>48</sup>. They published calendar titled *But Shikan* with images of blasts in Urdu language which was for the audiences within Pakistan<sup>49</sup>. The statements of Hazara eyewitnesses regarding cooperation of Urdu speaking engineers and observation of Arab speaking men<sup>50</sup> confirm the presence of Pakistani agents and Al-Qaeda and their involvement in the destruction of Buddhas<sup>51</sup>. Bamiyan was home to Shia Hazara minority which has opposed Taliban not only militarily but also criticized the Wahabbi ideology. This opposition had to be countered not only physically but also psychologically<sup>52</sup>.

Being a remarkable symbol of historical pluralism and a great paradigm of syncretization of various schools of art, the colossal Buddhas were the most visible monumental element which had survived from pre-Islamic Afghanistan. Secondly it was reminiscent of an icon-centric religion which was known to medieval Muslims as *But-parasti* (idol-worshipping). Their apparent glory which was a remarkable human artwork and their centric position in the Buddhist monastic complex of Bamiyan evoked essential attention and necessity of preservation and study. In contrast, their Buddhist essence became a fact which would make them target of the Islamic fanatic interpretation. Besides it, they were the largest Buddha statues of the world and any malevolent act would attract universal attention<sup>53</sup>. Having a clear understanding of these parameters on the one hand and pressured of UN sanctions of December 2000 and recognition as illegal regime that occupied ninety percent of the country, Taliban leaders attempted to use Buddhas as a political tool to communicate with the world community to gain political legitimacy and removal of sanctions. In this situation, the Taliban planned to shock the world by targeting the Buddhas; first to put pressure on world community to negotiate and to the fundamentalists by depicting themselves as true and loyal to Islam by idol breaking (*But Shikani*) as it was performed at the time of the Hajj pilgrimage<sup>54</sup>. They sacrificed a number of cows as expiatory of delay in the destruction. Nevertheless, Taliban were thinking more about its political impact rather than its theological effect<sup>55</sup>. Should we see Buddha's destruction in Islamic context and was it a successful project?

Destruction of Buddhas is unacceptable from the Islamic point of view<sup>56</sup>. Firstly there was no Buddhist in Afghanistan and they were not religious icons. Moreover, they were exposed to Muslim iconoclastic act centuries before and now they were part of cultural heritage. As the Buddhas were not objected by Muslim Ulema or sultans when Bamiyan was a great Islamic centre under Ghurid kings<sup>57</sup> therefore, their destruction has no Islamic justification. According to Islam all those figural statues which were produced prior to the rise of Islam are part of history and should not be harmed. Meanwhile most of the Muslim countries preserve their pre-Islamic heritage as part of their history<sup>58</sup>.

The legitimacy of Taliban's Islamic conclave (*shura*) is also controversial. Firstly the identity of these Ulema is ambiguous and their edict was not based on Islamic sources. Secondly, the Buddhas had already been recognized by the Muslim scholars as cultural heritage therefore, accuracy of these Ulema was rejected by Islamic countries<sup>59</sup>. What Taliban gained was a large number of volunteers from various Arab countries, western region of Pakistan and more

funds from extremist groups<sup>60</sup>. Eventually none of the attempts to prevent the destruction of Buddhas could stop Taliban and even did not remove their regime which followed a policy to avenge the UN and contempt for the world community. But this act certainly excluded the regime from the circle of civilized humanity and illegitimized their regime in the minds of humankind<sup>61</sup>. It was resonant of a universal countenance to remove this regime after September 11 attacks. In other words disingenuous plan of destruction of Buddhas under the name of Islam was almost an unsuccessful action which isolated the Taliban further.

From the point of view of international law, some features made it distinct from other cultural destructions and reported it as *criminal juris gentium* or crimes against peace and security of mankind<sup>62</sup>. Given the fact that the Buddhas were not demolished in war or accidentally shot and were not in enemy's territory or a military stronghold but were cultural monuments that were dynamited during the control of Taliban over Bamiyan valley by a pre-planned and systematic process and documented for universal broadcast, make it different from other cases<sup>63</sup>. As Boparachchi has pointed out, "*it is the first time in human history, the state is taking the initiative to decree its subjects to destroy their own past*"<sup>64</sup>. Moreover, it was an outrage to humankind's values not only by hurting the sentiments of the world Buddhist community and giving rise to the sectarian conflicts in the region but also unleashing a symbolic violence by erasing the icons of history and identity. The regional support from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates which had already recognized Taliban as a legal regime in Kabul, established their political and economic relations and virtually functioned as a shield against the UN decisions<sup>65</sup>.

### **Hazara ideas about Bamiyan Buddhas: A Folkloric Reading**

The Persian primary sources project a new picture of the Bamiyan statues which is tremendously distinct from what we had earlier; a transformation from religious cult to popular culture as they possibly depict the statues of Bamiyan Buddha as characters of a popular romance from 9<sup>th</sup> CE onwards. Perhaps, this could be an answer to the popular romance which was hegemonized by Arab romances like *Laila wa Majnun*<sup>66</sup>. Historically the people of Khorasan (historical name of present day Afghanistan) appreciated the romances as the stories like *Wameq wa Uzra*<sup>67</sup>, *Bizhan wa Manizha*<sup>68</sup> were well-known to them. Even, it could be an intellectual way of preserving them by folding them in layers of literature. Almost all the Persian primary sources refer to these statues as *Surkh-But* (red idol) and



*Khing-But* (bright gray idol); the former as male, a lover and the latter, as female and the beloved<sup>69</sup>. The terms are Persian and precisely indicate the color of the statues. Bright gray can be identified with the color of Stucco used for drapery of statues, over the sandstone body and the red color could be the pigment on the bigger statue, which presumably could also have been painted just as the niches themselves had murals. This is a rational conclusion as painted niches and painted iconic statues are not sights which were abnormal<sup>70</sup> in those times, regions and art traditions.

The character of these Buddha statues is not identified as the historical Buddha in these Perso-Arabic sources but instead a love story had been fashioned which attracted even a person like Mahmud of Ghazna. While these Buddhist statues were just in the vicinity of Ghazna yet they didn't attract his wrath. Its public fame encouraged Unsori (poet) to compose it as a romance for the Sultan and this shows a deep shift in identifying these statues as an inspiring source for literature. However, we are not aware of what the story of this couple actually was, as one of the main works on this issue called *Hadith Sanami al-Bamiyan*<sup>71</sup> by Al-Biruni did not survive. The Perso-Arabic primary sources show that the romance of *Surkh-But* and *Khing-But* was popular in medieval Persian world. Practically, the reconstruction of the romance of *Surkh-But* and *Khing-But* from these fragments seems to be impossible but a popular Hazaragi story related to Bamiyan Buddhas and other sites around them help us to see a general view of the romance.

### **Bamiyan Buddha in Hazara Popular Culture**

According to Hazara folktales<sup>72</sup>, the larger statue is called Salsal and he was supposedly the son of a Pahlavan<sup>73</sup>. The smaller statue was called Shahmama, who was allegedly the daughter of the Mir of Bamiyan. Here we see that even across the genres and centuries separating Persian sources and Hazara folktales, still the gendered pairing of the two statues as a man and woman have remained the same; *Surkh-But* and *Khing-But* which were mentioned earlier are Salsal and Shahmama. The Mir of Bamiyan who knew of the love of Salsal for his daughter was unhappy as he was not impressed by Salsal. He suffered from two major problems in his territory; destructive floods and the double headed dragon that ate his people. Shahmama too was aware of this situation and loved Salsal but could not ignore her father. With the interference of nobles, the condition for marriage with Shahmama was



declared to be a successful attempt at stopping the flood and killing the dragon. For achieving these hard conditions, Salsal needed a legendary weapon which should be made of steel mined from Fuladi mountain and should be forged by a wise *pir*<sup>74</sup> at Ahangaran<sup>75</sup> in Ghur. The protagonist of this story, Salsal makes this extraordinary march and returns with the legendary steel sword. He first closed the river with a dam (*band*) and then in a deadly fight killed the dragon<sup>76</sup> (fig.1). He skinned the dragon and sent it to be used as a carpet for the day of marriage but he succumbed to the wounds inflicted by the demon spirit of the dead dragon (fig. 2).

In a conclave of nobles, the Mir and his courtiers accepted him as the hero, who had earned the merit to marry Shahmama and thus the day of marriage was announced. The Mir and nobles ordered to carve two memorial niches for them on the façade of the mountain to celebrate their marriage and for remembering the triumph of Salsal over the dragon. The niches were painted<sup>77</sup> and the bigger one was covered by red embroidered curtains while the small niche was decorated with green curtains. The lovers were supposed to remove these curtains by sunrise to let the people see them as couples standing in the niches and then they should walk on the carpet made of dragon skin towards their future house. But it never happened. When the curtains were removed people saw Salsal and Shamama had turned into stones and were dead<sup>78</sup>! The people screamed on seeing that and thereafter they lighted candles in those niches and recited tragic poems in their memory. They called it the ‘niches of Love’ and told this story to the travellers and also named their children after the lovers.

A critical approach to the story can take us closer to the origin of this myth. Firstly, the name Salsal means baked clay which technically is very close to the stucco artwork and has same meaning of *Khing-But* in Persian sources. Secondly, reference to Ahangaran in Ghur as the place providing the legendary sword confirms the quality of Ghurid weapons which have been mentioned in Persian sources of 10<sup>th</sup> CE. This evidence, possibly thus takes the origin of this myth of Salsal and Shahmama back to the 10<sup>th</sup> CE. Moreover, the same legend is also ascribed to the first Imam Ali<sup>79</sup> but there is a shrine with Timurid architecture in Band-i-Amir making the legend of Ali a later addition<sup>80</sup>. But interestingly, the Hazaras hadn’t associated these statues with any religion; rather they had been preserving them as constituent parts of popular myths and imagination. Indeed, we have a confluence of two gigantic statues, a natural lake and a dragon-shaped rock which lends credibility to this legend of the locals. The two natural sites of Band-i-Amir and Dara-yi-Azhdar are associated with this story<sup>81</sup>. The legend doesn’t remember the face on these statues which suggests that the possible

chronology of the myths was after Yaqub's iconoclastic act of 9<sup>th</sup> CE. Alongside the name of Salsal, the Hazaras also often call it *Surkh-But* which encourages us to establish a link between their myths and 10<sup>th</sup> CE Perso-Arabic sources.

Changing the character of Buddha from a calm wise man giving sermons and choosing the middle path for salvation of his followers is completely distinct from the mythical life of Salsal<sup>82</sup> as a young Pahlavan, a lover, hero, warrior, a volunteer for achieving extraordinary actions. In fact, it is probable that the environment of Indian subcontinent would naturally create a peaceful character like Buddha and the harsh environment and rugged topography of Khorasan would create such martial myths like that of Salsal<sup>83</sup>; the Khorasanis used to mix all extraordinary issues with the mythical characters<sup>84</sup>. Here, the climax of the narrative is also different; Buddha enters *Parinirvana* while Salsal would remain standing eternally. Buddha becomes the central figure of a religion and stands as an icon for worship for the Buddhists but Salsal becomes a source of romance and an icon of love. Buddha becomes the main icon for religious art but Salsal appears as inspiration for folk literature. Distinctively, Salsal has a beloved and kills the demon dragon for her while Buddha left his wife, son and worldly pleasures in midnight. For Buddha, achieving the way for salvation of humankind was the driving force, while for Salsal it was his love for Shahmama and his sense of duty and responsibility. Indeed, the Hazara myths confirm the *Khing-But* and *Surkh-But* of the Persian sources and clearly show the transformation of a religious cult into folk culture; a syncretization of the Indian religious symbol and the Persian mythical essences and characters.

Another popular local story is *Buz-i-Chini*<sup>85</sup>. It is a children's story and events take place in the caves next to the Buddha's niches. Through *Baba-yi Ghisagoy* (the old storyteller) the children would get familiar with the character of a smart goat that lived with his kids in a cave next to Salsal and Shahmama. The character of the goat and its life in peaceful pastures and the presence of a black wolf are not coincidences perhaps; instead it might have historical roots in the social problems of the region<sup>86</sup>. Revisiting the story of *Buz-e-Chini* in the form of animation<sup>87</sup> has directly involved the Hazara children with story of Salsal and Shahmama as part of their cultural heritage through generations.

In essence, this longstanding association with Buddha statues established a sympathetic relation with them and placed them within their daily life tales; the grandmothers told this story with love to the children and they carried it to the next generation. As a result, any

desire to damage these statues which had been time immemorial occupied position of central importance for the identity of the Hazaras of Bamiyan would be directly opposed by the people. Their interest for them would naturally almost reject any iconoclastic purposes as they had already internalized the statues as part of their folk identity, and immortalized it within their oral folk traditions, irrespective of its original religious affiliations or connotations<sup>88</sup>. Moreover, the tomb of Mir Sayed Ali Yakhsuz<sup>89</sup>, a Sufi saint and the two remaining domed Islamic tombs were probably part of an Islamic complex located exactly opposite to the statues. So, any local Muslim pilgrim while traversing the area would see the tomb of his *pir* on one side and the faceless statues on the other (fig.3). Thus perhaps it can be deduced that even the *pir* and his followers did not have any problem with the presence of the statues as to them they were only artworks, a source of a romantic story and absolutely a wonder of the world. It makes sense to state that they had more liberal<sup>90</sup> interpretation of Islam<sup>91</sup>.

Ironic to the Islamic iconoclasm, the present generation of Hazaras believed that the statues were carved by their ancestors with Hazara facial features in antiquity. They therefore believe that these statues are the emblems of their identity<sup>92</sup>. They think that the statues were defaced by the Pashtun king Abdul Rahman in 19<sup>th</sup> century but the statues were defaced in the medieval era. In fact, their argument is rooted in the old stories of Abdul Rahman's subjugation of Hazaras in 19<sup>th</sup> century. They also knew that how Kabul government had superimposed the Pashtun *Kochis* (nomads) by gifting the Hazara lands and pastures to the *Kochis* through Firmans<sup>93</sup>. This has continued through formal broadcasting of wrong information by later Afghan governments<sup>94</sup>. Therefore, the act of preserving the statues would be like protecting their own identity. During the civil war, based on their historical and cultural values, the Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari commissioned a group of soldiers to guard the statues in 1996 and even in spite of being an Islamic madrasa alumnus, he never objected to them<sup>95</sup>.(fig.4)

For the Taliban, however there was no better target than the Buddhas of Bamiyan, to cover its political desires. The Bamiyan Buddhas were historical symbols and icons of folk identity for Hazaras but were opportunistically propagated by the Taliban as symbols of idolatry and the Hazaras were implicated in it as wrong-doers<sup>96</sup>.

Thus the Hazara soldier was not only fighting for his corporeal survival but also for his ethnic and folk identity too. Indeed the sensitivity of the issue would make them anxious to respond

to the Taliban by singing (fig.5). *“If you are wishing to break the statues, then come to me first, come from the mount of Shibar”*<sup>97</sup>

All this anxiety and anger to protect the Buddha statues proved unsuccessful as the Pakistani aircrafts opened the way of Taliban to the valley of Bamiyan<sup>98</sup> in 2001 and soon the world was shocked by seeing horrible scenes of blasting of the statues. The catastrophe of the destruction was also accompanied by genocide<sup>99</sup> of civilian Hazaras, burning their houses<sup>100</sup> which brought about their exodus and exile from the valley. In fact, they were massacred because of their Shia religion which was opposed to Taliban’s Wahhabi ideology.

### **An alternative for Bamiyan Buddhas**

The Hazara response to iconoclasm and reaction to the destruction of Buddha could be seen in two main aspects- cultural and political. It was not only the condemnation statement released by the Hazara leaders but the intellectual stratum which tried to replace it with suggestions of an alternative, if the physical restoration was not possible. The idea of an alternative was strongly projected through individual works, particularly in the paintings. Among the leaders of this cultural group, Khadim Ali, Akbar Khorasani, Hafiz Pakzad and Awrang are known faces. On their canvas, a deep mourning is visible and an awareness of what they have lost. In Khadim Ali’s, words: *“To me Buddha is my past, my identity. When someone is standing to remove “my identity”, I must also stand to re-create it...”*<sup>101</sup> As a person trained in modern art and fully aware of the inherent Islamic dislike for representational art, Khadim Ali went further to mix the Islamic symbols and script with Buddha images (Fig.6).

His decision to show the Buddha within the Sanctorem of Kaaba<sup>102</sup> is an absolute innovation. This painting is a loud appeal against the destruction of Buddha and projected the outcry that this loss was as much harmful for all the Buddhists around the world as the destruction of Kaaba could be for the Muslims. By writing the Islamic script upside down and from left to right (See, Fig.6) he has tried to show how the Islamic fundamentalists have often interpreted Islam in wrong ways. The red tulip flowers around Buddha (See, Fig.7) have links with ancient Persian myths of blood of Siyawakhsh<sup>103</sup> as this flower is also the symbol of martyrdom.

In his paintings, Khadi Ali has two main characters, Buddha in white drapery and a dark skinned, bearded and horned fat demon wearing bangles and anklets. Here, the white colour symbolizes innocence of Buddha and the demon represents a non-native *muzdur*<sup>104</sup> as his bangles suggest the sign of bondage, servitude<sup>105</sup> or being an attendant figure and his horn is sign of ignorance (Fig.8). To him, the Taliban is an ignorant *muzdur* who has a wrong interpretation of Islam and his distinct clothing style, horns and bangles perhaps symbolize his different ideological affiliations. The other demonic figure is the Taliban's spiritual leader who confirms the destruction. By drawing the Twin Towers and crashing planes, he brings both events in the same context to show their link, as to him the Taliban is not only the enemy of art and culture but of also all human development. In contrast to other works, he shows Buddha with closed eyes and on one canvas, he paints a lock on the legend of Rostam and Sohrab and depicts the empty niches of Buddha beneath. By comparing the murder of Sohrab with destruction of the Buddha on the one hand and on the other hand the lock as well as the multiple bars across the Buddha in other paintings (Fig.9), he attests metaphorically that with this destruction, a glorious cultural background has also come to an end.

Similarly, the Bamiyan born Hafiz Pakzad said that his heart blasted when he saw the images of destruction. He immediately felt that he should fill the empty niche. He wished to paint the Buddha in its original size and place it in Bamiyan<sup>106</sup>. His large painted Buddha found a place in Guimet Museum to remind the visitors of Bamiyan's ancient glory. To Akbar Khorasani, collage of white, black and red colours within the niche represents three periods; peace, glory and violence<sup>107</sup>. On the other hand Awrang tries to show the mystery of the statues through a combination of dark niche and compare its destiny with that of Hazaras.

Buddha became the subject of the Persian poems in two forms of classic and modern poetry. Hazara poets have composed many poems after the destruction. Mourning, and links with Hazaras identity and wish for its restoration are common themes. Its existence in Hazara area is given as the reason of its demolition too:

*The dark clouds appeared above the mountains,  
It rained and the wind wailed from the darkness,  
The rain stopped as the moon appeared shiny like the Christ,  
It then resisted against the order of the darkness of the night  
The Buddha torn into thousand pieces,  
the Buddha shared the destiny of Hazara.*

*The shiny moon then fell into the depth of darkness of the night,  
 The sun came out in the morning  
 but the face of the mountain was frozen,  
 The sun died and the sky became cold and frigid.  
 Buddha did not exist anymore,  
 the throat of the valley got torn,  
 A loud voice was saying,  
 “May the idol die, May the Shias, the infidels die”.  
 The satellites showed at night, the live images of  
 what we have heard about the legend of Jihad<sup>108</sup>*

Here, the dark clouds, the night and the loud voice represent the Taliban and the shiny moon symbolizes the innocence like that of Christ but it is covered by the darkness which is that of bigotry and ignorance. He then tells about the link between Hazaras and the Buddha. Consequently, the world will see what they have heard in the legends about *Jihad*. To him this is a challenge as the days of traditionalism have returned.

It is not surprising for Hazara youths to perform the story of Salsal and Shahmama in the theatres. They are trying to say that the Hazara love for Buddha statues is for its cultural value and its position in human civilization. They were of course the mark of Buddhism in antiquity but now they are source of their legends, folktale and evidence of their ethnic origins. From the political point of view, a wide use of image of Bamiyan Buddha, signature campaigns for their restoration, creating websites, personal weblogs, etc are used to attract the attention of the people to their situation. The Hazaras began a non-violent movement to make this aim true and used almost all opportunities to announce it. To find out their origin, they called for a DNA project, the result of which is still under investigation. In their posters, they consciously filled the niche of Buddha with the face of a Hazara old man. They represented the lost Buddhas in the form of an old man to ask the new generation for this project and in fact they equalized the Hazara old man with Buddhas as both had suffered from discrimination and fanatic ideology (fig.10).

The Hazaras welcomed the Afghan government's conventions on reconstruction of Buddhas and supported this decision as they would see the icon of their identity again and certainly it would bless Bamiyan valley by its tourist attraction. They thought that it would be compared with Mostar Bridge<sup>109</sup> in terms of reconstruction and were hopeful. Eventually, the polemic

on reconstruction of Buddhas ended with the UNESCO's statement saying that the Buddhas won't be restored. The given reason was limitation of original materials and public dislike for a fake statue<sup>110</sup>. This decision is supported by Afghan government as according to them there are urgent priorities which have preference to this project<sup>111</sup>. While some experts believe that the smaller statue could be restored<sup>112</sup>. Calling it as a "shameful" decision, the Hazaras said that as the statues are located in Bamiyan, a Hazara populated area so any reconstruction will project the Hazaras and release them from its historical isolation which is not favoured by the to Kabul government<sup>113</sup>. They referred to the failure of Afghan government to even build a proper road to Bamiyan which was the most secure province in the country, Indeed Kabul wished to support the restoration of tomb of Rahman Baba in Pakistan while monuments within Afghanistan are in danger<sup>114</sup>. The Hazaras welcomed the UNESCO's recognition of Bamiyan valley as world heritage site<sup>115</sup>, but do not expect any positive work from the government's side.



## Conclusion

Apparently, the Taliban demolition of Bamiyan Buddhas in March 2001 emphasised the Islamic hostility to representational arts, rooted in Semitic dislike for figural images. The surviving evidence from medieval Muslim territories shows that the nature of the so called Islamic iconoclasm was basically to remove the false gods and prevent idolatry. Theology, politics and economy was impulse of iconoclasm. Moreover, it varied from individual to individual and location. Generally, piercing of eyes, defilement, mutilation and dispersal of the statues were known ways to inanimate the images and to prove that the idols were impotent false gods. Analogy of the medieval Muslim iconoclasm which affected Bamiyan Buddhas in 9<sup>th</sup> century AD with the Taliban action shows that the Taliban action did not have any resemblance to medieval Muslim iconoclasm. Besides, the identity of Taliban conclave which issued the edict of destruction for destruction of Buddhas remained obscure and its resistance against the recognized and prestigious Muslim scholars and the theologians undermined ideological foundation of Taliban.

Clearly, the Taliban action is a modern phenomenon performed under the name of Islamic Iconoclasm. The motivations behind destruction of Buddhas could be seen as a reaction against the UN sanctions against the Taliban regime, declaring Rabbani's government in exile as the Afghan legal government and the Taliban as illegal regime. It reflected the Taliban Pashtun values and their misinterpretation of Islam influenced by Wahhabism and also manipulation of Al-Qaeda and Pakistani fundamentalist groups. It was to take revenge as they were frustrated for their failure to get UN recognition on the one hand and depicting themselves as the most loyal and strong protectors of Islam to extremist groups on the other. Besides, obliterating the ancient history of a country which was once the hub of the image centric religion of Buddhism and centre of trans-culturalism in Asia under the name of Islamic purification was to create an Islamic Emirate modelled after Saudi Arabia but with Pashtun identity. It would also provide cover the old ethnic hostility and traffic of pre-Islamic artefacts towards Pakistani markets from where they found their way to world art markets. In fact, while destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas delegitimized the Taliban regime further, but it provided more volunteers and funds for them.

Contrary to the medieval iconoclasm, the Persian primary sources projected a new picture of the Bamiyan statues which is tremendously distinct from what we had earlier; a transformation from religious cult to popular culture could be an intellectual way of

preserving them by folding them in layers of literature. Indeed, the story of *Surkh-But* and *Khing-But* composed by Unsori and Al-Biruni should have been known to the Persian world in 10<sup>th</sup> century as it was a popular romance. Not only the ordinary people of Khorasan but even the courtiers and a zealous sultan like Mahmud welcomed it, because for them the statues were not religious icons at all. Except for few poems, most of the works related to the Buddhas are not survived. Therefore, reconstructing the myth of *Surkh-But* and *Khin-But* based on these few poems is a difficult mission.

The Hazaras preserved an old local story which can help us to see the myths of *Khing-But* and *Surkh-But* of the Persian sources which clearly show the transformation of a religious cult into folk culture or popular culture- a syncretization of the Indian religious symbol and the Persian mythical essences and characters. In essence, this longstanding association with Buddha statues established a sympathetic relation with them placed them within their daily life tales. Their centric position in the Hazaragi folktales of Bamiyan preserved them for centuries. They remained intact under the rule of Hazara *Mujahidin* during the civil war and a group of guards were commissioned for their protection by Hazara leaders. Their attempts to protect the Buddhas upon the arrival of Taliban in the Valley were defeated by the Pakistani aircrafts and this let the Taliban achieve their goal of destruction. The Hazaras reacted to the Taliban act through demonstration and cultural movement and tried to create an alternative in the form of art and literature. Not only in painting and poetry but they began a campaign for their reconstruction which was later rejected by UNESCO and the Afghan government. The Hazaras did not accept this decision and interpreted it as “shameful and discriminative decision”<sup>116</sup>.

Eventually, the Buddhas after centuries standing in their silent niches were the source of cult and cultural inspiration demolished under the name of Islam. As B. Flood concluded “*worse still is the fact that to memorialize these events a just one more examples of Islamic iconoclasm would be to valorise the monuments to their own brand of cultural homogeneity that the Taliban created in Bamiyan*”<sup>117</sup>. Indeed, the West’s plan to revive the Taliban by giving them protection and position in Afghan government will be another page in which not only destruction of the remains of pre-Islamic art of Afghanistan will be repeated but the demolition of the Islamic monuments under the name of *Shirk* will also be added.

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Fig 1. Band-i- Amir,Bamiyan, a natural lake which is believed to have been created by Salsal according to myths. Later it was associated with Imam Ali (photo by Reza 2006)

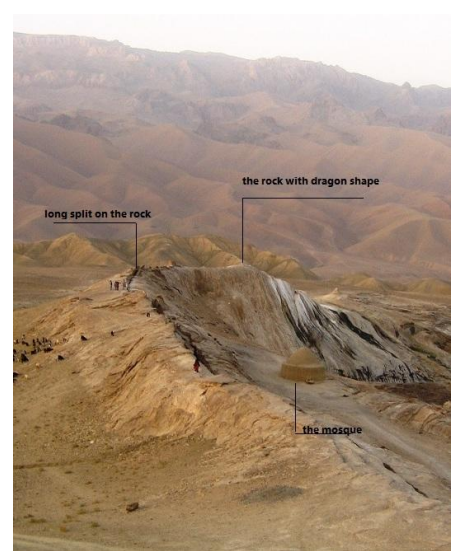


Fig 2. The rock with dragon shape located in the west of the cliff of Buddhas (photo by Said Reza 2006)



Fig 3. Tomb of Sayed Mir Ali Yakhsuz, opposite to Buddhas, Bamiyan (photo by Said Reza, 2006)



Fig 4. The Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari in Bamiyan, 1996. (<http://shojaee1362.blogfa.com>)



Fig 5. A Hazara soldier next to the large Buddha, 1995. They did not harm it while being armed and ruled on the Valley for long time but protected them. (Photo by Ciao Maria Grazia "One Day in Bamiyan"<http://www.raffaeleciriello.com/site/pw/46bamiyan>.)



Fig 6. Executing Buddha by Khadim Ali, Bamiyan series. Miniature, gouache on Wasli paper. (<http://Universes-in-universes.org>)



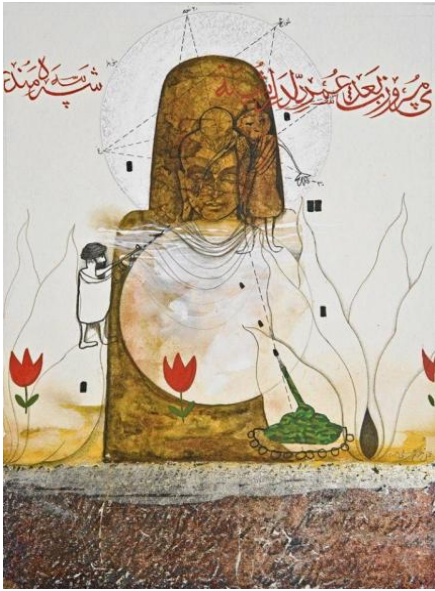


Fig 7. Execution of Buddha, opaque water colour and gold leaf on Wasli paper by Khadim Ali, Bamiyan series. (<http://heritage-key.com>)



Fig 8. Executed Buddha under the arm of demon by Khadim Ali, Bamiyan series. Miniature, gouche on Wasli paper. (<http://somehatmorefree.wordpress.com>)



Fig 9. Battle of Rustam and Suhrab, Khadim Ali (<http://www.canadianart.ca>)

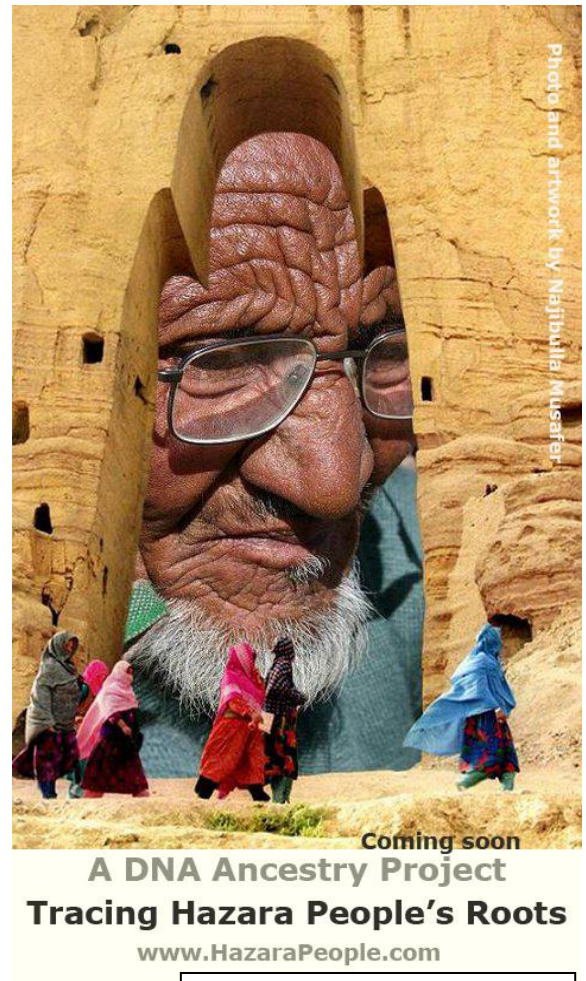


Fig 10. A Hazara old man shown in the niche of great Buddha, Najibullah Musafir. (<http://www.hazarapeople.com>)

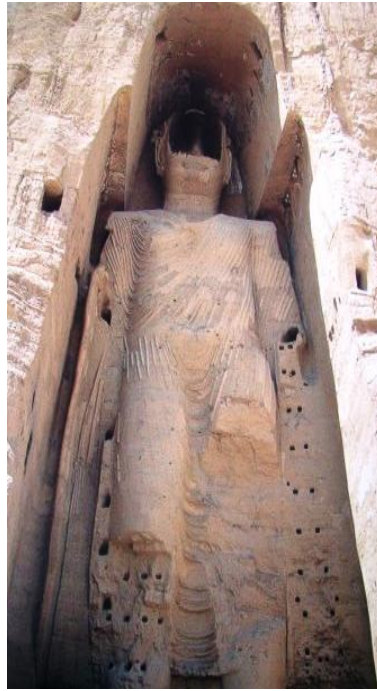


The But-Shikan calendar. In Urdu Language published in Peshawar. Source: K, Warikoo. *Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage*. Issued under the Auspices of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, (Third eye Press, New Delhi, 2002).p. 156.

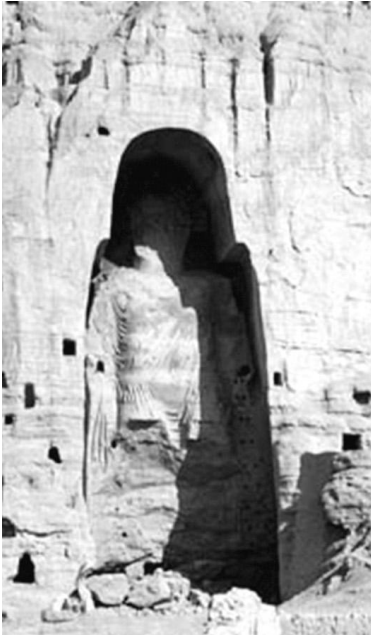




Great Buddha before destruction.  
(www.cais-soas.com)



Great Buddha, the upper part of face is blackened by Taliban in August, 2000. Photo by CNN, August 2000, published in J. Tucker, *The Silk Road Art and History*. (Philip Wilson Publishers, London, 2003).p.181



Great Buddha, The head and the legs blasted by dynamite.  
(www.planckconstant.org)



The last step of blasting Buddha source: K, Warikoo. *Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage*. Issued under the Auspices of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, (Third eye Press, New Delhi, 2002),



Empty niche of great Buddha after destruction. Source: K, Warikoo. *Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage*. Issued under the Auspices of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, (Third eye Press, New Delhi, 2002)

## Notes

Having seen the Bamiyan Buddhas earlier and again visiting it in 2004 and this time seeing the empty niches of Buddha, I wished to share the local stories of Hazaras of Bamiyan regarding the Buddha statues. Professor Dario Gamboni in JNU whose I am so thankful to and to Dr. Kavita Singh for their lectures and advise. I also remain indebted to all those Afghans who have contributed to the repertoire of Hazara folklore. Special thanks to Dr. Najaf Haidar for his comment and helping with Mughal sources. Thanks to Prof. Warikoo for organizing the second seminar on Bamiyan Buddhas and for his valuable comments. I am very thankful to Haji Fahimi, ex-deputy of Bamiyan Governor for his kind attention and valuable information particularly on the situation of Bamiyan in 200. I am thankful to Tahir Shah who facilitated my trip to Bamiyan. I am also tahnkful to Shweta Shetty for her valuable comments and to all those Afghan students and residents of Bamiyan who provided me with myths of *Salsal* and *Shahmama*.

<sup>1</sup>The term Bamiyan as challenge to world heritage was coined by prof. K. Warikoo as title for his book which was a reaction to this vandalism and included various articles. I am grateful to him for his valuable comments and also his support for organizing the second seminar on Bamiyan Buddhas at India International Centre, New Delhi on May, 7, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> F. B. Flood. "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum". *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 84, No. 4, (Dec.2002).p.641.

<sup>3</sup> D. K. Salter. *The Kingdom of Bamiyan: Buddhist Art and Culture of Hindu Kush*. Istituto Universitario Orientale Dipartimento Di Studi Asiatici Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, Naples, Rome, 1989).p.26.

<sup>4</sup>The Chinese monk Xuanzang recorded valuable information about Bamiyan's socio-political situation, its religion-based economy of 7<sup>th</sup> century AD which would be dependent on this network. Here, the constant visit of multinational devotees and dedication of charities, gifts and donations would economically enrich the shrines. See Shoshin Kuwayama. "Chinese Records on Bamiyan: Translation and Commentary". *East and West*, Vol. 55, No. 1/4 (December 2005), 139-161 Published by *Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* (IsIAO).pp.144-45.

<sup>5</sup> Salter has argued that these Buddha colossi are connected with the ritual of *Pancvarshika Parisad*. See D. Salter, *Meaning and function of Bamiyan in 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries*. In Warikoo, K. *Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage*. Issued under the Auspices of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation (Third eye Press, New Delhi, 2002).p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Based on Xuanzang's report and comparative historical analysis, Salter conjectured that the statues are representing the life of Buddha; she identified smaller statue with Buddha Shakyamuni and larger with Dipankara which resembled the Dipankara images from Kapisa. In contrast, Suzan Huntington argued that this huge statue is a transcendental image and could be of Vairocana. See S, Huntington. *Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (Weatherhill Press, New York, 1985).p.206. Referring to Xuanzang's report on dominance of Turks in Thokharistan and the statement says that the statues were completed short prior to his arrival, Salter conjectured that the Buddhas could not be built earlier than 600 AD and by no one than the Turk Khaqan T'ung Shih Yebghu. See D.K. Salter, "Bamiyan: Recent Research". *East and West*.vol.38.N.1-4 (Dec, 1998).p.38. Related to chronology, if Bamiyan, if murals are compared with those of Kizil and Soghdian then the niches of Buddhs were painted not earlier than 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. This could be supported by existence of some images with Sassanian decorative elements. See Hallade, Madeline. "*Gandharan Art of North India: and the Graeco-Buddhist Tradition in India, Persia and Central Asia*". (Harry. N. Abrams Publishers, New York, 1968).p.157

<sup>7</sup>Hazaras are an ethnic group in Afghanistan and had occupied the central part of the country though there are remarkable Hazara populations living in west, north and south of the country. Their origin is controversial but recently Sayed Askar Mousavi argued that they can't be of Mongol or of Turk descendants only but mixture of races taken having taken place in Khorasan continuously for a long time. So, they are most probably mixture of an indigenous population who mixed with Iranian, Turk, and possibly are effected by Mongols. The idea of pure



Mongol descent comes out from the European writers like Armenius Vambery (1864), Alexander Burns (1839), Mountstuart Elphinstone (1978), and with mostly colonial notion. See S.A. Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study*. (Curzon Press. London, 1998), pp.21-24. The local inhabitants of the Bamiyan valley are dominantly Hazaras, speaking Persian in Hazaragi dialect and are Shia Muslim. They have preserved a romance about these statues which seems to have been derived from an ancient version of possibly the *Khing-But* and *Surkh-But* legend. Linguistically, the Persian words they use are traceable to the Persian sources of 10<sup>th</sup> CE. Moreover, they use some words of Avestan language which are uncommon among the other Persian speakers today. Unlike the commonly known idea of descendance from the Mongols (which is not yet proved accurately), they are unfamiliar with the Mongol culture, but have strongly preserved some traits of Zoroastrian and Buddhist cultures. Their villages and places are deeply associated with Zoroastrian names. Their majority are of Shia Iammi sect of Islam but there are minorities of Ismaili Shia and also some follow Sunni Hanafi faith. Their facial features and faith was the main issue for prejudice for the governments of modern Afghanistan and had become the tool for legitimizing political exploitation followed by misbehaviour and genocide supported by religious decrees. Rarely has their culture been introduced by the Afghan government, therefore their story of the Buddha is still unreleased.

<sup>8</sup> Mullah Omar's decree of 1999

<sup>9</sup> Jamal. J. Elias. "(un) making idolatry: From Mecca to Bamiyan". *Future Anterior*, Volume IV, Number 2. (Winter 2007).p.17.

<sup>10</sup> Iconoclasm means destroying the images and it is derived from the Greek term.

<sup>11</sup> It is mentioned that the prophet scratched the eyes of the idols by an arrow but Al-Bukhari accepted that the prophet touched them with his steak. See *Sirat al- Nabi* (9<sup>th</sup> century CE), Arabic primary source on biography of Prophet Muhammad written by Abi Muhammad Abdul Malik ibn Hisham. Ed. Majdi Fathi al-Sayed (Dar al-Sahaba Lil Turath be Tantana, Cairo.1416/1995), Vol.4.p.40.

<sup>12</sup> It is in *Al-Isra*, verse 81 and it said: "Truth has (now) arrived and Falsehood perished: for the Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish". (جاء الحق و ذهب الباطل ان الباطل كان زهوقاً). Ali, A.Y. (Tran.), *The Holy Quran* (Royal Publishers & Distributers, New Delhi, 2000).p.266.

<sup>13</sup> *Kitab al- Asnam* (9<sup>th</sup> century CE), Arabic primary source on Arab Idolatry written by Ibn Hisham Kalbi. Translated by Muhammad Reza Jalali Naeeni. (Nashr-i-Naw Press, Tehran, 1364/1986).pp. 273-76.

<sup>14</sup> Chase. F, Robinson. *The Rise of Islam 600-705*. The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol.1. The Formation of the Islamic World Sixth to Eleventh Centuries. Ed. Chase F. Robinson (Cambridge University Press, 2010).p. 222; Fred. Donner, *Modern approach to early Islamic history*. The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol.1. The Formation of the Islamic World Sixth to Eleventh Centuries. Ed. Chase F. Robinson (Cambridge University Press, 2010).p.629.

<sup>15</sup> It derived from the Arabic word "شراكة Shiraka" means associating something with someone implies associating Other Gods with God)

<sup>16</sup> F.B. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (Dec. 2002).p.641

<sup>17</sup> It is in *Al-Ikhlās*, verse 1 which said: "He is Allah the One and the Only". (قل هو الله احد) A.Y. Ali, (Tran.), *The Holy Quran* (Royal Publishers & Distributers, New Delhi, 2000).p. 605.

<sup>18</sup> It is an emphasis on this issue as *Al-Imran* verse 19 which says: "The religion before Allah is Islam..." see A.Y. Ali, (Tran), *The Holy Quran* (Royal Publishers & Distributers, New Delhi, 2000), 44. Also see *Al-Maidah* verse 3: "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion". Ibid. p.93. (اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم و تمت عليكم نعمتى و رضيت لكم الاسلام ديناً)

<sup>19</sup> This verse dates to early years of Islam and is still controversial as according to that Muslims and non-Muslims can live together and the Muslim has no right to forcefully convert others to Islam. It is in *Al-Kafirun*

verse 6 which say: “To you be your Way, and to me mine” (لكم دينكم ولي دين) see A.Y. Ali, (Tran), *The Holy Quran* (Royal Publishers & Distributers, New Delhi, 2000).p. 604.

<sup>20</sup>Mahmud’s expedition to Somanatha in Gujarat was in fact a political motivation which could convince the theological impulse supported by economic benefits. R. Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (Penguin Book, New Delhi, 2004).p.51.

<sup>21</sup>Abubakr Narshakhi in his *Tarikh-i-Bukhara* mentioned that the many materials were belonged to pre-Islamic building used by the Muslims for building the mosque of Bukhara where built on an older Buddhist temple. The gates with figural images used for new mosque after defacing them (و روی صورت بتراشید و باقی بگذاشته راست کردند). See *Tarikh-i-Bukhara* (4<sup>th</sup> AH/10<sup>th</sup> century CE), a Persian Primary source written by Abubakr Narshakhi. Tran. by Abu Nasr al-Qobawi and summarized by ibn Umar. Ed. by Mudarris Razawi (Saadat Press, Tehran. 1317/1939), 57-58. In other case the Muslim conquerors changed the Zoroastrian fire temple of Mughaki Attar in Bukhara or Jain temple of Delhi where Qutb Minar is standing and the Byzantium Church of Constantine to a mosque. See: J. Tucker, *The Silk Road Art and History*. (Philip Wilson Publishers, London, 2003).p.646.

<sup>22</sup>F.B. Flood, “Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum”. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (Dec. 2002).p.644.

<sup>23</sup>P. C. Graves, “From an Archaeology of Iconoclasm to an Anthropology of the Body: Images, Punishment and Personhood in England, 1500-1660”. *Current Anthropology* Volume 49, Number 1, (February 2008).pp. 37-8.

<sup>24</sup>Al-Baladhuri in his book *Futuh Al- Buldan* mentioned that Abdl Rahman ibn Samorah led the Muslim Army against the Kabul Shah and in a battle could conquer Rukhaj. There he came to know about the temple of Zur which its icon was well known. He mutilated the statue and removed the gemstones from its eyes and passed it to the local ruler of the area and said that he mutilated the idol to show that this idol has no power. See *Futuh Al- Buldan* (9<sup>th</sup> century CE), Arabic primary source on History of Islam, written by Abu Al-Abbas Ahmad Bin Jab Al-Baladhuri. Trans. by Azartash Azarnush, (Intisharat-i- Bonyad-i-Farhang Iran, Tehran, 1346/1968).p.71. It should be noted that many of the Gandharan statues were decapitated during Muslim (Mahmud and his father) expeditions to India.

<sup>25</sup>P. C. Graves, Opcit. p.39.

<sup>26</sup>F.B. Flood, Opcit. pp.646-47.

<sup>27</sup>R. M. Riefstahl, “Persian Islamic Stucco Sculptures”. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Dec. 1931).pp.439-40.

<sup>28</sup>The Umayyad palace of Qusayr Amra (Syria) and Abbassid palace of Jausaq, Samarra (Iraq) preserved their wall paintings which are showing some animal, human figures. All are decorative art and has not religious significance. See T. D. Rice, *Islamic Art* (Thames and Hudson. Revised edition, Printed in Britain, 1975).pp.26-32. It is also worth mentioning that the poets at Mahmud’s courts left some poems showing that Mahmud had a garden at Balkh in which its chambers had been painted. Interestingly these paintings were all showing Mahmud in battlefields, on his throne or in party.

<sup>29</sup>F.B. Flood, Opcit. p. 650.

<sup>30</sup>*Zain al-Akhbar* (1050 CE), Persian primary source on history written by Adul haiy ibn Zahak Garezi. ed. Reza Zadeh Malik. (Anjuman-i- Asar wa Mafakhir Farhangi, Tehran, 1384/2006).p.206. (واز آنجا بازگشت و بسوی بلخ رفت و بامیان بگرفت اندر سنه ست و خمسين و مائين و نوشاد بلخ را ويران کرد)

<sup>31</sup>R. Thapar, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (Penguin Book, New Delhi, 2004).p.59. Indeed, Romila Thapar has argues that Mahmud’s raid to Somanatha in 1026 could be seen from politico-economic aspect as well. Ibid.p. 51.

<sup>33</sup>F.B. Flood, Opict. p.649.

<sup>34</sup>*Mujam al-Buldan* (623 A.H/1225 CE), an Arabic primary source on Geography written by Yaqut Hamawi. Trans. by Alinaqi Munzawi, (Miraj Press, Tehran, 2001), Vol.1.p.419.

<sup>35</sup>F.B. Flood, *Opict*.p.651.

<sup>36</sup> These motivations are suggested by Flood, Gamboni, Pirre and Francesco Francioni.

<sup>37</sup> D. Gamboni, "World heritage: Shield or Target?" *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter*, Vol.6. (November 2, 2001).p.11.

<sup>38</sup>Wahid Muzhda says that many Afghan artefacts reached Peshawar, Dubai and London for sale immediately after the Taliban's announcement for destruction of figural arts. He mentioned that some anonymous groups in the name of Taliban's delegations reached London with antiques for sale. See W. Muzhdah, *Afghanistan in five years of Taliban's sovereignty* (Nay Publication, Tehran, 1382/2004).pp.84-87

<sup>39</sup>P. Centlivres, "The Controversy over the Buddhas of Bamiyan", *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, Special Issue - No. 2, (2008).p.7

<sup>40</sup>Taliban established Islamic Emarat with calling their leader as *Amir al-Mumenin* (commander of the faithful) which has used by Caliphs.

<sup>41</sup> Destruction of Buddhas was a sheer obloquy to Buddhists of the world and forcing Hinuds (in Kabul and Jalalabad) to wear the distinct clothes or Hazaras to choose either reconverting to the Taliban's Islam or paying Jazya or chose death. Khaliqdad from Bamiyan, Abdul Ahad from Ghazni and other Hazaras from Mazar-e-Sharif are given the same words in this regard. Taliban indeed imposed their ideology the others. D. Gamboni, "World heritage: Shield or Target?" *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter*, Vol.6. (November 2, 2001).p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Taleban defend statue destruction. CNN.com .March 5, 2001

<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/03/05/afghanistan.m5/index.html>

<sup>43</sup> John. Betlyon, "Special Report: Afghan Archaeology on the Road to Recovery". *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (March, 2004).p.59.

<sup>44</sup> D. Gamboni, "World heritage: Shield or Target?" *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter*, Vol.6. (November 2, 2001).p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> F.B. Flood, *Opcit*.p.651.

<sup>46</sup> The view of support would even come from other known fundamentalist groups who fight against India. Kashmiri militant organization *Harkat-ul-Mujahidin*, supported the Taliban's decision for destruction of Buddhas. "In an Islamic country there is no concept of idols and our holy prophet taught us to break the idols", said a statement from the Pakistan-based group, which is fighting against India in Kashmir.

See:[http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/History/NATIONAL%20TREASURES/statues\\_destroyed/islamic\\_reaction.htm](http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/History/NATIONAL%20TREASURES/statues_destroyed/islamic_reaction.htm)

<sup>47</sup> It should be mentioned that Maulana Fazl ur-Rahman the leader of JUI (F) while defending the Taliban's decision of demolishing the statues has said that every government has the right to make decisions. "The Afghan government can understand whether this decision is in accordance with the Islamic injunctions or not. It is a matter of Islam and Afghanistan has all along remained an Islamic country. I do not know if there are any statues in Afghanistan but that country has a government, which makes decisions according to Islam. So, they should be left to make decisions on their own." (March 1, 2001, NNI) ISLAMABAD. See: [http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/History/NATIONAL%20TREASURES/statues\\_destroyed/islamic\\_reaction.htm](http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/History/NATIONAL%20TREASURES/statues_destroyed/islamic_reaction.htm)

<sup>48</sup>Taliban leader's statement insisted that they are not idol brokers but an idol breaker is comparable with that of Mahmud's statement at Somanatha.

<sup>49</sup>This calendar was designed and massively published in Peshawar to satisfy supporters of Taliban.

<sup>50</sup>Interview with Khaliqdad resident of Bamiyan (Name changed on request). The presence and involvement of Arabs and Pakistanis is reported by Pak Tribune as well. See Bin Laden's fingerprints seen on ruins of Bamiyan

Buddhas on 22 October, 2006. Pak Tribune. <http://paktribune.com/news/Bin-Ladens-fingerprints-seen-on-ruins-of-Bamiyan-Buddhas-157871.html>

<sup>51</sup> The Saudi Salafi Shaikh Mahmud Aqla praised Taliban for such heroic action. Other religious fundamentalists mostly from Saudi praised appreciated Taliban but were unhappy as the Taliban had delayed their mission. So, they recommended for giving expiatory which was later achieved by sacrificing the cows. W. Muzhdah, *Afghanistan in five years of Taliban's sovereignty* (Nay Publication, Tehran. 1382/2004).p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> D. Gamboni, "World heritage: Shield or Target?." *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter*, Vol.6. (November 2, 2001).p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> J.P. Fishman, "Locating the International Interest in International Cultural Property Disputes". *The Yale Journal of International law*, vol. 35: 347. (2010).p.361.

<sup>54</sup> It is argued that Taliban's destruction of Buddhas was an action of their self-understanding and should be seen in the context of Muslim memory. For this argument see Jamal. J. Elias. "(un) making idolatry: From Mecca to Bamiyan". *Future Anterior*, Volume IV, Number 2. (Winter 2007).p.18

<sup>55</sup> P. Centlivres, "The Controversy over the Buddhas of Bamiyan". *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, Special Issue - No. 2, (2008).p.7

<sup>56</sup> The Taliban regime itself had earlier announced that the Bamiyan Buddhas do not have religious significance and there was no Buddhist in Afghanistan therefore, the regime was responsible for their preservation as it could help the regime by attracting tourists. See "Katiba", *Journal of Association of Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Afghanistan*. No.6. (May, 2000)

<sup>57</sup> See C.E. Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghur". *Central Asiatic Journal*, VI. The Hague-Wiesbaden, 1961.pp.116-133. *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. Variorum Reprints, (London, 1977).

<sup>58</sup> No Muslim country reported such vandalism against the art works in its territory yet. The Islamic world admired the two sculptures almost from the day Islam became entrenched in the area around the ninth century. See: *International Herald Tribune* 3 July, 2001

<sup>59</sup> On March 11, 2001, high Muslim delegation led by Qatar Minister of Foreign Affairs and some highly renounced Muslim Scholars from Al-Azhar included Shaikh Nasr Farid Wassel, Shaikh Muhammad al-Rawi and Shaikh Yusuf al-Qarzawi, the most popular preacher in Arab world visited Pakistan to convince the Taliban to stop the destruction as it was not only a sacrilege to the cultural heritage but would blacken the face of Islam in public imagination. Taliban did not respect the delegation's appeal and continued their work which was in reality a kind of ignoring the Muslim delegation. See Jamal. J. Elias. "(un) making idolatry: From Mecca to Bamiyan". *Future Anterior*, Volume IV, Number 2. (Winter 2007).p.18.

<sup>60</sup> W. Muzhdah, *Afghanistan in five years of Taliban's sovereignty* (Nay Publication, Tehran, 1382/2004).p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> P. Centlivres, "The Controversy over the Buddhas of Bamiyan". *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, Special Issue - No. 2, (2008).p.16.

<sup>62</sup> F. Francioni, "The Destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan and International Law". *EJIL* (2003), Vol. 14 No. 4.p.620.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pp.620-45.

<sup>64</sup> Osmound Boppearachchi. "Recent Archaeological Discoveries from Afghanistan: Destruction of Cultural heritage in *Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage*". Ed. K.Warikoo.p.54. One should point out that when the Taliban were destroying the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, they did not think that these statues are part of their own past and instead would feel that these are idols and belonged to the Hazaras as they forced the locals to drill the statues and place dynamites.

<sup>65</sup> F. Francioni, “The Destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan and International Law”. *EJIL* (2003), Vol. 14 No. 4, 619–651.p.642

<sup>66</sup> Laila Majnu, is a well-known Arabic romance.

<sup>67</sup> According to Awfi, the romance of Wameq and Uzra was composed by Unsori for Mahmud. See Muhammad Awfi. *Lubab al-Albab*. A Persian primary source, with preface by Edward Brown, translated by Muhammad Abbasi, (Mumtaz Publication. Tehran. 1983).p.519.

<sup>68</sup> Ferdawsi composed this story in his grand epic called *Shahnama*. See Abul Qasim Ferdawsi. *Shahnama* (Amir Kabir Publication, Tehran, 2006).p. 215.

<sup>69</sup> For the term *But* (idol) in Persian see H.W. Bailey, “But in Iranian language”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, University of London. Vol.6.No.2. (London, 1931).pp.279-283.

<sup>70</sup> The painted statues were found from Ghurband valley located in east of Bamiyan and also from Gandhara.

<sup>71</sup> This book has not survived but through other sources we are aware that al-Biruni researched on Bamiyan Statues. See Z. Safa, *History of the Persian Literature in Iran*. (Firdawsi Publication, Tehran, 1991). Vol.1.p. 561.

<sup>72</sup> My personal and independent research in Bamiyan, on the Hazara folktales carried out in 2004, I came across various oral traditions on these statues.

<sup>73</sup> *Pahlavan* is derived from *Pahlaw* in Parthian tradition and means the warrior and could be traced to Parthian myths. There is reference in *Shahnama*. Some elite families in Ghur would call themselves Pahlavan. And later in *Tarikhnama yi-Herat*, Saifi Heravi continuously speaks about the *Pahlavans*. See Saif ibn Muhammad al-Heravi, *Tarikh Namayi Herat*. (a Persian primary source 718-721A.H./1318-21 ACE), edited by Ghulam Reza Tabataba. (Asatir Publication, Tehran, 2005).p. 541.

<sup>74</sup> *Pir* in Persian means wised man.

<sup>75</sup> It was the capital of the Ghurids in Khorasan and due to plenty of ironsmiths it was called Ahangaran. See C.E. Bosworth, “The Early Islamic History of Ghur”. *Central Asiatic Journal*, VI. The Hague-Wiesbaden, 1961, pp.116-133. *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. Variorum Reprints, (London, 1977).

<sup>76</sup> The locals refer to the Band-i- Amir as the stone wall made by *Salsal*. Though there is another person who thought Ali achieved these two conditions for converting the locals to Islam. Though contrary to popular beliefs, geologists opine that the dam has naturally occurred and is not man-made.

<sup>77</sup> One may perhaps enquire as to the subject of these painted motifs, especially if these murals originally had Buddhist themes or secular representations from the folklore of Salsal and Shahmama. And if so, a persistent question arises as to the nature of affiliation between this folklore and that of traditional Buddhism. The only plausible explanation of this dilemma could be that, the frame, space and subject of the painted niche was adapted to local folklore and imaginative oral tradition in the manner of the folk romances with which the locals were familiar with.

<sup>78</sup> Salsal died due to the curse of the dead dragon’s spirit but Shahmama died in the tradition of the faithful beloved who followed her lover even unto death.

<sup>79</sup> Ali was also the 4<sup>th</sup> Muslim Caliph. This later and alternative version of the myth which portrays Ali as a spokesman of the state religious institution of Islam in the region and his act of slaying the dragon and stopping



the floods by building the dam, thus could be read as an attempt of creation of a hero out of religious leaders, in order to make mass appeal and mass acceptance of Islam amongst the civilians by bringing a Caliph from the lineage of the Prophet himself, closer to the common man. This could be a politically engineered motive behind ascribing a Caliph, Ali and not any other king, nobleman or common man with the hero-like status in popular imagination. This action was a reaction especially in reference to a place which had been the womb of other religions like Zoroastrianism and Buddhism and possibly the creators and propagators of this myth were aware of parallel folklore of Salsal and Shahmama but wanted to re-affirm the land's Islamic affiliation through the customized myth of Ali as the dragon slayer. However, no parallels have been drawn with Ali and the niches or the statue or the murals, possibly because of the un-idolatrous nature of the latter coming religion of Islam.

<sup>80</sup>There is another Timurid shrine in Mazar-e-Sharif, called Mazar-e-Sakhi jaan which is allegedly the shrine of Ali. There are local stories which depict him as a great warrior who killed a big snake, which could be an alternative to the dragon, in the area called Gur-i-Mar in east of Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. Interestingly, the name Gur-i-Mar in Persian means the grave of the snake. However, one should also remember that Bamiyan and Mazar-e-Sharif are approximately 200 kms apart.

<sup>81</sup> N. Dupree, *An Historical Guide to Afghanistan*. Afghan Tourist Organization, printed by Jagra, Ltd. Japan, 1977. pp.170-71. And also see P. Levi, *The Light Garden of the Angel King: Journeys in Afghanistan*. (The Bobbs- Merrill Company, Inc. Indianapolis, New York, 1972). p. 66. A travelogue dated 1260/1844 mentions the story of this lake and connects it with Caliph Ali and says that this story was common even among the traders in Bukhara. See: *Safar namayii Bukhara (travelogue of Bukhara)*, a Persian report written by an anonymous Qajarid ambassador in 1260/1844. (ed.) H. Zamani, (Pazhuhishhayi Ulum Insani wa Mutaliati farhangi. Tehran, 1373/1994). p.71. For common ideas on this lake and valley of Dragon see K. Yazdani, *Bamiyan sarzamine Shigifitha : Bamiyan the land of the wonders*. (Matbaayi Tibaati wa Sanaati Ahmad, Kabul 1378/2008). p.63.

<sup>82</sup>Ascribing mythical proportions to the central character like Salsal, who was an ordinary person with extraordinary abilities, is perhaps a concept borrowed from the dramatic transformation of a historically existing young man, from a prince Siddhartha Gautama to a Shakyamuni Buddha who could also perform miracles or later as per the *Jatakas*, into a Dipankara Buddha.

<sup>83</sup>It is of utmost importance to note that the characteristic attributes of Buddha's principles of non-violence were not adopted in this region, especially in being more faithful to the popular romance or folk or epic traditions of martial prowess of the protagonist; a tradition with which this region was more familiar with, notwithstanding the early dominant presence of Buddhism in the region.

<sup>84</sup>For example, the central heroic character in Persian mythology is Rostam. His myths have intermingled with many local stories in the whole Persian world and often allegiance to him has been made with places like Takht-e-Rostam in Samangan, Afghanistan and Naqsh-e-Rostam, near Persepolis, Iran.

<sup>85</sup> *Buz-i-Chini*, is like a didactic moral tale and possibly this oral tradition might have been supplemented with ceramic or terracotta toy characters made for the children; thus perhaps the word *Buz-i-Chini*, which means the 'Ceramic Goat'.

<sup>86</sup>The hostility between the Pashtun residents of South Afghanistan with Hazaras goes back to early 18th CE with the entry and encroachment of the Pashtuns on the Hazara dominant region of South of Afghanistan, wherefore the Hazaras were gradually pushed towards the north-west and towards the central highlands. For hostility of Pashtuns with Hazaras and their treatment see Cole, R.I. Juan, *The Taliban, Women and the Hegelian Private Sphere*. In Crews, D. Robert and Amin Tarzi. *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. (Harvard University Press, 2008). p.131.

<sup>87</sup>Its availability with English subtitles, suggests the growing popularity and demand of such Hazaragi folktales among the Afghan diaspora. *Buz-e-Chini*. Post. MM. Zers. A Hazaragi Folk story from the Bamiyan Valley. Story by Husian Yosufi and produced by Nasim Javad. It is directed by Abbas Ali .see <http://urozgan.org>

<sup>88</sup>Quite similar is the way the Greek *Aesop's Fables* share similarities in adaptations with the Indian *Panchatantra*, Persian *Kalila wa Damna* and is also visible in Tibetan Folktales.

<sup>89</sup>There is a circular tomb located to the east of the large Buddha and is ascribed to Mir Sayed Ali Yakhsuz from whom the Sayeds of Bamiyan claim descent. His arrival to Bamiyan from Sabzawar (a city near Nishapur, Iran) was mixed with mythical stories as it is said that he would make fire out of ice. The creation of such myths for a historical character is not surprising in Bamiyan. It is mentioned that Wahhabism has already declared war against Sufism as the latter objected to the ideology of the Wahhabi school. The tomb of Mir Ali Yakhsuz has survived due to two possible reasons; firstly the Taliban focused on demolition of Buddhas and secondly the shrine has no building and is an open tomb with old trees. The population also was not able to visit this site, so the site did not attract the attention of the Taliban and survived.

<sup>90</sup>Admittedly, only such rich cultural background and peaceful nature could let the Hazaras to allow and elect a female governor like Habiba Sarabi, even amidst the religious and patriarchal society of Afghanistan. Earlier the Hazara women and men wished that their son would grow up and become the governor of Bamiyan. Now it is evident that they are accepting their daughters also in that position and thus it attests to the Hazaras liberal and accommodating outlook towards many aspects of life.

<sup>91</sup> S. Amin, "Papers on Arab Spring". Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, (March 2012).p.9.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Abdul Ahad Muhammadi. New Delhi, April 12, 2012.

<sup>93</sup>The Pashtun king Abdul Rahman declared religious war against the Hazaras which created increased the sectarian conflicts among the inhabitants of the country and remained as a legacy till today as the Taliban declared the religious war against the Hazaras during their sovereignty. See G.M. Ghubar, *Afghanistan dar Masir-i- Tarikh (History of Afghanistan)*, (Maivand Publication house, Kabul, 1382/2003).pp.669-70.

<sup>94</sup>The census of 1978-79 depicts the Hazaras as minority in Bamiyan while recent census by International NGO's rejects it. See, World Food Programme (WFP) report on Bamiyan <http://www.foodsecurityatlas.org/afg/country/provincial-Profile/Bamyan>

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Haji Fahimi, New Delhi, April 27, 2012

<sup>96</sup>It is common knowledge that Shia'ism (also practiced by Hazaras) is ideologically not considered a constituent part of Islam by the dominant Wahabbi group of Taliban and along with the territorial hostility of 18<sup>th</sup> century this was another reason for the Taliban targeting of Hazaras. Robert D. Crew agrees that with faith and race were the major reason behind the massacre of the Hazaras in Afghanistan. See D. R. Crews, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. (Harvard University Press, 2008) ,6.

<sup>97</sup>According to Haji Fahimi a group of Hazara young men decided to stop the Taliban in an ambush to prevent destruction plan but they were mostly killed by Pakistani fighters and helicopters. It is a Hazaragi song accessed through personal interaction with the composer, beginning with, "*Bud agar maida muni az kotali Shibar biya...*" one of the ways to Bamiyan passes through Shibar Pass and it has composed by Davood Sarkhush in 2001.

<sup>98</sup>Telephonic interview with Khaliqdad (name changed on request), Bamiyan, 2012. Same words are given by Haji Fahimi as well.

<sup>99</sup>Taliban massacred many residents of Yakawlang with swords while being dressed in white clothes and riding horses to create the dramatic impression that they are the white angels of God and representing those who had helped Muhammad in the battle of Badr. Telephonic interview with Khaliqdad (name changed on request). Bamiyan. 2012. See Sinno, Abdulqader. *Explaining the Taliban's Ability to Mobilize the Pashtuns*. In D. R.Crews, and A. Tarzi, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, (Harvard University Press.2008).p.59.



<sup>100</sup>Taliban burnt the Yakawlang bazaar. Telephonic interview with Khaliq Daad (name changed on request). Bamiyan 2012. The same narration was given by Haji Fahimi.

<sup>101</sup> Khadim Ali is a Hazara young painter who was born in 1978 in Quetta, Pakistan. He studied Art in Lahore College and later traveled to Bamiyan but then there were no Buddha statues any more. His interview was published in *Kabul Nath*, no.7. July, 2005 see <http://www.kabulnath.de>

<sup>102</sup> Kaaba, the holiest shrines of the Muslims in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

<sup>103</sup> A mythical person in Shahnama who was killed by Afrasiab

<sup>104</sup> *Muzdur* literary means a hire laborer but in Persian it means hireling of the devil also. See *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* by F. Steingass, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Serving whom? Perhaps to the phantom presence of the horned golden demon in one of the paintings who sits facing a bleeding disemboweled Parinirvana Buddha with a displaced halo, out of whom another haloed *muzdur* is superimposed, while this golden silhouette is crowned with a black lotus-motif halo.

<sup>106</sup> Source <http://naweederooz.com/in/29.html>

<sup>107</sup> Personal Interview with Akbar Khorasani, Kabul, August 5, 2009

<sup>108</sup> Ali Baba Awrang painted Buddha and combined it with this poem in Nastaliq script. This painting is in Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA) collection which I have personally visited on August 07, 2009 and had a conversation with Awrang. The original Persian poem is :

*Abre siah amad o bar koh istad, ...baran girift o zuzayi zulmat kashid bad*  
*Baran nishast o mah masihayi pak shod, ....angah dar barabari hokmi shab istad,*  
*Buddha hazar para o Buddha hazara shod, ...,mahi hazar para ba ghari shab uftad,*  
*Sobh aftar amad o yakh bast roye koh, ...khurshid mord o raft ofogh rob a injimad,*  
*Buddha nabud o darra galu para karda bud, .... "But murda bad, Shi 'a o Kuffar murda bad",*  
*Shab chand bar pakhsha shod az mah vara ha, ...tasvir hayi zinda az afsanayi Jihad.*

<sup>109</sup> Mostar bridge is located in Bosnia and Herzegovina and was built by the Ottomans in 16<sup>th</sup> century, it destroyed by Croat forces in 1993 and restored in 2004

<sup>110</sup> See [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media\\_services/single\\_view/news/experts\\_outline\\_plans\\_for\\_preservation\\_of\\_bamiyan\\_buddhas\\_world\\_heritage\\_site](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media_services/single_view/news/experts_outline_plans_for_preservation_of_bamiyan_buddhas_world_heritage_site)

<sup>111</sup> Bamiyan governor Ms. Habiba Sarabi has stated that are several countries with willing to reconstruct the statues technical possibility of reconstruction and funds, but there is no interest shown by the Afghan government for their reconstruction yet. See Qiyam, M. Barg namayi Fanus-i- Hunar, <http://garderah.persianblog.ir/post/53>

<sup>112</sup> Erwin Emmerling of the University of Munich said that it is possible to restore the smaller Buddha.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Abdul Ahad, New Delhi, 2012

<sup>114</sup> see [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media\\_services/single\\_view/news/experts\\_outline\\_plans\\_for\\_preservation\\_of\\_bamiyan\\_buddhas\\_world\\_heritage\\_site/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media_services/single_view/news/experts_outline_plans_for_preservation_of_bamiyan_buddhas_world_heritage_site/)

<sup>115</sup> F. Francioni, "The Destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan and International Law". *EJIL* (2003), Vol. 14 No. 4, p.621.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Abdul Ahamd Muhammadi. New Delhi, 2012

<sup>117</sup> Flood, F.B. *Opict*.p.655.

