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Destruction of Buddhist Heritage in Bangladesh: A Study on Religious Persecution of Indigenous Communities

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ABSTRACT

At the intersection of religious fervor, the erosion of cultural heritage and the struggle for minority rights lies a complex tapestry of violence, where beliefs clash and identities are threatened, igniting a fervent debate on coexistence and justice. This research investigates the destruction of Buddhist heritage and persecution of Buddhist communities in Bangladesh, with a focus on religious violence and cultural erasure. Although Bangladesh is predominantly Muslim, a minority Buddhist population exists, primarily in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. Recently there was an incidents took place in Rangamati & Khagrachari district where minorities were attacked, looted and burnt their shops and houses by the Muslims settlers with the help of Bangladesh military even Buddhist monasteries were attacked and burnt down. These kinds of heinous incidents often always been occurred against Buddhist communities. As a result, the chief monk of the Buddhist community announced not to conduct Kathina Civara Dana in this year due to the lack of protections. Data were collected through social activists, chief monks of Chittagong Hill Track and news. This qualitative research explores the extent of physical and emotional damage inflicted on both the religious sites and the community. The methodology focused on gathering firsthand accounts of destructions, harassment, and the socio-political factors contributing to the targeting of the Buddhists. Preliminary findings reveal widespread destruction of ancient Buddhist temples, some of which date back centuries, along with physical violence against monks and laypeople. Many participants reported that these attacks are politically motivated and often go unpunished by authorities. The research suggests a coordinated effort by extremist groups to erase Buddhist groups to erase Buddhist presence in the country, coupled with governmental inaction, which has exacerbated the persecution. This study underscores the need for greater international awareness and protection of religious minorities in Bangladesh, particularly in preserving the rich cultural and religious heritage of the Buddhist community (Indigenous).

Keywords: Buddhist Persecution, Bangladesh (Indigenous), Religious Violence, Heritage Destruction, Minority Rights.