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ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN SOUTH ASIA

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This is the first of a three-part article. “Part II: Afghanistan and Pakistan” and “Part III: Bangladesh” are forthcoming. Jere Van Dyk is currently a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs and a consultant on South Asia and al-Qaeda to CBS News. Mr. Van Dyk grew up in Washington State and attended the University of Oregon. He served in the U.S. Army 1970 to 1971. He later attended the Sorbonne and l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Paris. From 1973 to 1977 he was a staff assistant to Senator Henry M. Jackson in the U.S. Senate. In the early 1980s, he covered the Afghan-Soviet war for *The New York Times*, for which he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. He is the author of *In Afghanistan*. He helped start, with Zalmay Khalilzad, Friends of Afghanistan, which was overseen by the National Security Council and the State Department. He has taught “the politics of Islam” at New York University. Mr. Van Dyk has worked either for *National Geographic Magazine* or *The New York Times* in South Asia, East Africa, South America, Tibet, the former Soviet Union, Japan, and North America.

Part I: The History, Rise, and Future of Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia

Ever since September 2001, people in the United States and other parts of the Western world have been afraid of what we call Islamic fundamentalism. It has become synonymous with modern terrorism, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and with militant Muslim groups in Europe, East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

A great deal has been written about Islamic fundamentalists, most of whom we feel either want to convert us or kill us. But what really is Islamic fundamentalism, and what is an Islamic fundamentalist? How did it begin? How strong is Islamic fundamentalism and in what direction is it going? What can or should the United States do about it?

Some feel that the Cold War, which lasted 45 years, was World War III, and that America’s “war on terrorism,” which now extends from Iraq, to Afghanistan, to Africa

to Southeast Asia, is World War IV. Most Americans, especially those who are interested in foreign affairs, are focused on the war in Iraq and the Middle East.

This paper is about the history, rise and current state of Islamic fundamentalism in South Asia, the most populated region in the world and home to the largest concentration of Muslims on earth. There are over 1.5 billion people in South Asia, which includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

If one includes China, directly north, there are 2.7 billion people in this region, nearly one-half of the world's population. South Asia is home to nearly one half of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims. Nearly 30 percent of this region is Muslim.¹

From October 2006–March 2007, I traveled in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, countries I have worked in before as a journalist. I briefly visited Indian-administered Kashmir, where I had not been before. I had visited Pakistani-administered Kashmir in December 2005. Drawing on my own experiences in the past, I wanted to study the history and rise of Islamic fundamentalism and see where it is today.

This is a report on my trip and on my conversations with academics, activists, politicians, writers, and religious leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Kashmir, and Bangladesh.

THE BEGINNING

In 610 A.D., Muhammed bin Abdullah, a wealthy Arab merchant who often went into the desert near his home in Mecca searching for God, was meditating in a cave on Mt. Hira, about three miles from Mecca, when, according to Muslim belief, the angel Gabriel, known as *Ruhu al Quddus*, the Holy Spirit, spoke to him.

"Read," he said. The word is *"iqra,"* in Arabic, from which comes the word Qur'an. *"You are the messenger of God,"* said Gabriel.

Muhammad, orphaned as a young boy, now married to a woman 15 years his senior, Khadijah ul-Kubra, with whom he had six children, was 40. He was overcome with emotion. He returned home and told his wife what had happened. She comforted him. Thus began Islam, which means surrender to God, to *"al-Lah,"* the God, in Arabic.²

¹ P. S. Ghosta, "Socio-Political Trends: Security Implications for India," *Faultlines*, Winter 2006, New Delhi, India.

² Arab Christians also pray to al-Lah. Christianity, Judaism, and idol worship existed in Arabia before the arrival of Islam.

Khadijah became his first convert. Within a hundred years, Muslim soldiers, with God on their side, and the Qur'an, the Word of God, in their hands, reached the Atlantic Ocean. In 711, Musa bin Nusair, the Muslim viceroy of Africa, sent Tariq bin Zayed, a Muslim convert and former Berber slave from North Africa, with an army of 12,000 men across the Mediterranean to Spain.

He landed at Jabul-ul-Tariq, or rock of Tariq, from which comes Gibraltar. He burned his ships. His army couldn't turn back. The sea was behind them. Muslims would rule Spain for 800 years.

In 732 a Muslim army reached the banks of the Loire River south of Paris, where the forces of Charles Martel defeated them at the Battle of Tours, also called the Battle of Poitiers, what Arab historians call the Court of Martyrs. The battle was close. According to some historians, had Muslim soldiers cared more about winning than the booty they had collected, they would have won. If so, historians feel that Europe would today be Muslim, not Christian.

Wrote Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "*Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revolution of Mohamed.*"

Muslim fundamentalists know of this battle, as they know about the loss of Spain. "*Do not weep as a woman over what you could not hold as a man,*" said Ayesha, mother of Boabdil, commander of the fortress of Alhambra, after he had looked back at what he had surrendered to the Christians in 1492.

From the Middle East, Arabs for centuries had crossed the Arabian Sea, long before they became Muslims, to trade in the ports of India. In 711, the same year that bin Ziyad invaded Spain, Muhammad bin Qasim, also with an army of about 12,000 men, invaded Sindh, a province today in southern Pakistan, and brought Islam to South Asia.

The Arabs wanted to continue to trade and accommodated other religions, among them Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Jainism, and were in turn accepted by those who followed these other faiths. By 714 Muslims had conquered south India, but remarkably, considering their successes elsewhere, Hindu kings, for the next three centuries, kept them, and thus Islam, from moving north and east.

The battle between Hinduism and Islam continues to simmer in India, and still breaks out into violence, as it did in Gujarat in 2002, when Hindus killed hundreds of Muslims,

while, critics claim,³ the conservative Hindu state government even helped the rioters. Recent world events played a role.

*"Like other Gujarati Hindus living in the city, I also believe that 'they' deserved it. They crossed their limits. Look what they did to the World Trade Centre. Are they going to overrun us? You know, we always face problems while we are in the Jamalpur area. We have to drive very carefully. They are ready to create trouble at the drop of a hat."*⁴

Arab Muslims crossed from the Middle East to West Asia during the same period that they reached Europe and Sindh. By the middle of the 8th century, they had conquered Persia, coming not so much with the sword but with the Qur'an and the certainty that they knew the true faith, they reached the Oxus River, also called the Amu Darya, today the northern border of Afghanistan.

They established frontier posts to hold back the Turks of Central Asia, who, in time, dropped their Buddhist and Shamanist beliefs and converted to Sunni Islam. Traders in oasis towns along the Silk Road became Muslims, and Buddhism declined as the main religion of Central Asia.

The Turks, who outnumbered the invading Arabs, increased in strength and now, using Islam as a source of their strength, moved into West Asia and established the Ottoman Empire, the last Caliphate.

A caliph, from the Arabic "*khalif*," meaning to leave behind, is a representative of Muhammad. The Caliphate, protector of Muslims and of the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, existed for over 1,400 years, until it died in 1924, brought down by an advancing Europe at the end of World War I. Turkey today is a nation state, both modern and with a Muslim fundamentalist element, bordering Europe, and anxious to join it.

In Afghanistan, a few hundred miles south of the Oxus River, on the road from Kabul to Kandahar, lies the ancient dusty town of Ghazni. Today there are only brown crumbling baked mud walls on a hill overlooking the city to remind a visitor that this was once the center of the powerful Ghaznivid Muslim dynasty.

It was Mahmud of Ghazni, a Turk who never lost a battle, who established that Sunni Islam would be the principal faith of Afghanistan and who brought Islam to northern India. From 1001 to 1025, Mahmud, whose ambition was to make Ghazni a center of

³ A. B. R. Chaudhury, "Sabarnati: Creating a New Divide," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai, India, February 24-March 2, 2007, pp. 697-703.

⁴ *Ibid.*; interview with a taxi driver.

the Muslim world and himself a champion of Islam, raided India 17 times, plundering the richest temples and destroying idols.

Mohammad destroyed the idols that Arabs worshipped in Mecca. *Allah-o-Akbar* does not mean "God is great" but rather, "God is greater." An omnipotent God, the one true God, is greater than any idol.⁵

Indian rulers, whom we inaccurately call Hindus, for there were many religious sects, fought one another for centuries and destroyed one another's temples and other places of worship, but it was Mahmud's almost annual raids that made him into the archetypal Muslim invader of Indian mythology.⁶

"All the invasions against us in history have come from the West," Major General Shaukaut Sultan, press secretary to General Pervez Musharraf, president of Pakistan, told me in December 2006 in his office in Rawalpindi. "This is most important to remember."

It is critical to Pakistan's thinking today, and explains in part, its ties to the Taliban and to the Afghan Mujahideen before them.

After Mahmud came Tamerlane, in 1398, from Samarqand. He sacked Delhi looking for treasure. The words "Hindu Kush," the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan, mean "Hindu killers." Hindu slaves captured in India died while being taken back across these high rugged snowy peaks to Central Asia.

In 1525, Babur marched from Kabul to the Punjab in India, and a year later conquered Delhi, founding the great Mughal Muslim Empire, whose revenues were said to surpass those of the Ottomans and Persia combined. In 1739, Nadir Shah of Persia, another Muslim, sacked Delhi. In 1767, Ahmed Shah Durrani of Kandahar and founder of modern Afghanistan extended his empire to Delhi.

Muslims were proud that they, a small minority who believed in one God and in equality for all men, ruled for centuries, some say 1,000 years, over caste-ridden, polytheistic Hindu India. Then the British came in the south, landing in Calcutta, and gradually moved north.

The last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II, like Babur, a direct descendent of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, died alone in a British prison in Rangoon in 1862 and was buried in an unmarked grave.

⁵ According to the Indian historian, Romalia Thapar, Mahmud may have also sacked Indian cities to reduce the import of Arab horses. The most profitable business for Ghazni traders was importing horses to northern India. Romalia Thaper, *The Penguin History of Early India*, Penguin, 2002, pp. 425-434.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 438-439.

"Have since visited the remaining State Prisoners – the very scum of the Asiatic harem; found all correct," wrote the British Commissioner in Rangoon, Captain H. N. Davies, a week after Shah died.⁷

The British presence, and their policies of dividing Hindu and Muslim and in waging diplomatic warfare with Czarist Russia for control of Asia, would greatly contribute directly and indirectly to the rise of modern Islamic fundamentalism.

FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism is a Protestant term that originated in the United States. It comes from a series of twelve pamphlets called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, financed by two Christian businessmen who were brothers, Lyman and Milton Stewart. They were published between 1910 and 1915. They wanted to give Christians strength to withstand the rising influence of liberalism, secularism, and Darwinism.⁸

The battle continues today in the nominally Christian west, and in the Muslim world, between secularism and religion. Islamic fundamentalists mostly reject the word fundamentalist, in part because of its Christian origins.

Most journalists and many intellectuals in the West, following author Salman Rushdie's call,⁹ prefer to use the word Islamist; others prefer Islamic extremist or Muslim fascists. Most Muslim fundamentalists I talked to prefer to be called, simply, Muslim.

"What is this Islamic fundamentalism?" asked Khalid Khawaja, a former Pakistani Air Force officer with Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), and who later, after being cashiered for writing a letter to president General Zia ul-Haq, his commander in chief, admonishing him for not being a good Muslim, became friends with Osama bin Laden. "I am a Muslim. That is it."¹⁰

In 1981, a BBC radio broadcast following the death of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat called the assassins "*Al Usoleyyoun al Muslemoun*," which some translate as Muslim fundamentalists, the first time this phrase was used.

"Islamic fundamentalism is nonsense, as is Islamic fascism," said M. J. Akbar, author and editor of *Asian Age*, a major Indian newspaper, sitting in his well-ordered, book

⁷ William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*, Penguin, Viking, 2006, p. 1.

⁸ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, Random House, 2000, p. 171.

⁹ Salman Rushdie, "Yes, This is about Islam," *The New York Times*, November 2, 2001

¹⁰ Interview with author, Islamabad, Pakistan, December 2006; Khawaja was jailed by Pakistani authorities in January 2007 on charges related to his outspoken opposition to the Pakistani government. He has become one of the "disappeared."

lined office in New Delhi.¹¹ “It is a tautology. If Islam is not controlled by its fundamentals, what can it live by? The Koran is the word of God and available to all. Islam is tied to its fundamental roots. Muslim extremism has always existed.”

He talked about a recent book he had written, *In the Shade of the Sword*. “It’s all in there,” he said. “Islam is 1,400 years old. Fascism appeared in the 1920s (1922) with Mussolini. (The Fascisti.) It is perfectly correct to say that some Muslims are fascists.”

Following in the footsteps of the Muslim conquerors from Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Persia, who, some feel, by the way,¹² created violent Islamic fundamentalism as a way to enjoy power in this world and pleasure in the next, destroying Islam’s sense of tolerance and intellectual vibrancy, came the Sufis, rebels against despotism, these mystical saints of Islam, of whom Rumi, the Afghan Persian poet from Balkh, is currently the most famous in the United States.

Sufis brought a kinder, gentler, mystical form of Islam to the lower Himalayas, to Jammu and Kashmir, and to South Asia. It was Sufi tolerance that softened the clash between Hinduism and Islam in northern India, and it was therefore the Sufis, not the military conquerors, who won thousands of converts in Kashmir and South Asia to Islam.

I visited the edge of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir in December 2005 after 73,000 people had been killed in the earthquake. People shivered in the cold, cooked over fires in the streets, and prayed in front of mass graves. In February 2006, I went to Indian-controlled Kashmir, the other side of this tired, sad land that was once a center of Sufism but whose people today are caught on both sides in a deadly political vice; squeezed between and used by India and Pakistan.

“Heaven on earth,” the signs say upon leaving the airport in Srinagar, the capital, which means “city of sunshine” in Sanskrit.

“Did you just come from India?” asked my taxi driver, letting me know that Kashmir was separate. I visited the Sufi shrine of Shah Hamadan, who brought Islam to Kashmir in the 13th century. I took off my shoes off, walked into the room where there were two caskets covered in green tapestry in a glass-enclosed case around which men stood chanting, reading the Qur’an, or walking piously around the case. In an outer courtyard, unveiled women sat and watched or prayed. Children played.

¹¹ Interview with author, February 2007, New Delhi, India.

¹² Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh, The Next Afghanistan*, Sage Publications, 2005, p. 23.

Wabbahis oppose worshipping shrines, which they consider the first step back to idol worship. Man must worship only God, not man, not Mohammed. Graves must be simple.

Every morning before dawn, the sound of the azan's first call to prayer fills the valley and continues in a sing-song fashion for a few minutes; this call is more lyrical, more like a song, than the austere, haunting call to prayer that one hears elsewhere in the Muslim world. With birds singing, it is enchanting, and Kashmir becomes clearly different.

This Sufism, and the beauty of the mountains, of Dal Lake and its famous houseboats, give a sense of peace, but it is illusionary. Kashmir is not heaven. It is a battlefield.

"Fundamentalism is a reaction to political circumstances, imperialism, for example, or, the inability to face modernity," said Siddiq Wahid, a Muslim, former professor of Central Asian Studies at Harvard, now vice chancellor of Islamic Science University, in Srinagar. "I call fundamentalists puritanical Islamists," he said.

We talked over tea and later dinner, while outside, hundreds of Indian soldiers and Indian paramilitary forces, never more than 20 feet apart, patrolled the streets of this Muslim city, which, with its old wood houses with lattice trim and the snow covered mountains surrounding the city, reminded me of Kabul years ago.

With armored personnel carriers in the streets, and sandbag machine gun emplacements, and the soldiers with their rifles, it reminds me of Kabul today. The figure is secret, but there are about 200,000 Indian soldiers in Kashmir.¹³

"Faith and intellectualism are not mutually exclusive," said Wahid, who is married to a Lutheran whom he met when going to college in Minnesota. "I came to my faith through analysis, through my study of Sufi masters and early Sufi saints. It is an intensely private affair. The mystical thought process, the recitation, the chanting—it is a search for peace in our hearts. One becomes in it without letting it get in the way, without it becoming fundamentalist. Mullahs do not have power here."

"We are not, by tradition, rebels," said Abdul, Wahid's brother, who is blind. "We are accommodating people, in our psychology also. There is gentleness here. A Kashmiri will show empathy for an Indian soldier. But there is now a gun culture here."

Once Sufism held sway in Kashmir, but today and increasingly, fundamentalism plays a central role in Kashmir, which is at the very heart of the dispute between India and Pakistan, and of terrorism in the world. After the Afghan-Soviet conflict ended in 1989,

¹³ Interview with Praveen Swami, March 2007.

the war in Kashmir exploded as jihadis, militant fundamentalists backed and directed by the military crossed the line of control and attacked Indian positions.

At one time there were numerous small kingdoms in this isolated region of the world where China, India, Pakistan, and once an expanding Russia came together. In the 19th century, long before India and Pakistan became nation states, Great Britain and Czarist Russia, the two great powers in the world, were vying for control of Asia. Kipling called this struggle "The Great Game."

In 1846, the British East India Company and Gulab Singh, the Hindu monarch, or maharaja, of the small kingdom of Jammu in the Himalayas, signed an agreement called the Treaty of Amritsar. This treaty bound together a number of small kingdoms into one, called Jammu and Kashmir, and created the Dogra dynasty which was tied to the British Empire as part of its strategy to keep back an advancing Russia.¹⁴

Singh, a British creation, kept the mass of his Muslim subjects in poverty. He imposed high taxes, and there were frequent outbreaks of famine. Some Muslims in Kashmir lived well, with ties to the maharaja. In the 1920s, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, of peasant background, rose to lead his fellow Muslims in a struggle for independence, but against his original plans, the struggle became political and religious, which would prove to be and continues to be a deadly mixture.

In April 1931, during Eid, a time when Muslims commemorate the story of Abraham and his son Ishmael in the Qur'an (the story of Abraham and Isaac in the Bible), it was alleged that a Hindu policeman had desecrated the Qur'an. Abdullah, against his instincts, was persuaded to give a speech in a mosque condemning the incident.

A fundamentalist ideologue, Abdul Qadeer Ghazi Khan, followed him, calling for an uprising against the maharaja, now Hari Singh. Khan and other fundamentalists wanted to draw Jammu and Kashmir into the anti-British sentiment growing in India. They called for a jihad against British imperialism. Singh threw Abdullah and Khan into prison. People protested and shouted *Islam zindabad* (long live Islam) in the streets. The police massacred many of them. Finally, Singh, drawing on the support of Muslims loyal to the throne, came to an agreement with the religious establishment of Srinagar.

Abdullah, representing the new and growing elite, formed the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, later changed to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, thus changing its communal tone. Over the next decade, he grew closer to the all-India anti-imperialist movement and to the socialist ideals of Jawaharlal Nehru, who was to become India's first Prime Minister.

¹⁴ Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad*, Routledge, UK. 2007, pp. 1-25.

Abdullah aligned himself with Nehru's Indian National Congress while his opponents allied themselves with the Muslim League, which wanted to create a new Muslim state called Pakistan. As the possibility of independence, and definitely partition, grew closer so did the battles grow greater in Jammu and Kashmir between the National Conference and those who wanted to capitalize on growing Hindu-Muslim tensions in India.

Then came August 1947 and partition. The princely states of India were bound, legally and morally, keeping in mind the wishes of their people and their geographic location, to choose between India and Pakistan.¹⁵ Singh, a monarch, was wary of Nehru's socialism and hesitated to join India, yet wondered how he, a Hindu, would fare in Muslim Pakistan. He hesitated, hoping, like Abdullah, for independence.

In some areas Hindus, backed by the state, attacked Muslims, killing thousands; Muslims retaliated, also killing thousands, reflecting the communal strife now engulfing northern India. Muslim soldiers in Gilgit in the northwest part of the kingdom rebelled and joined Pakistan. Gilgit Agency is today the northern most part of the Northwest Frontier Province, bordering China and Afghanistan.

India dispatched military forces to pressure Singh. Pakistan, with limited military resources—it had one major general, two brigadiers and 53 colonels at partition; the British, after the 1857 mutiny, refused to raise a Muslim brigade¹⁶—discreetly sent in Pashtun tribesmen, the first of its irregulars, today called jihadis, to fight back.

They made a daring sweep towards Srinagar, and Singh panicked. India said it would help him, but only if Jammu and Kashmir became a part of India. Without consulting his people, he signed the papers of succession and soon moved to Bombay. Within a year, India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir.

It ended with a cease-fire line which gave Pakistan one-third of the country and India two-thirds in a U.N. sponsored settlement. This was in 1948. The line has not moved. U.N. peacekeeping forces have been serving in Kashmir longer than at any other place in the world.

On January 5, 1949, India and Pakistan agreed to a referendum. "*The question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite,*"¹⁷ said the Security Council resolution.

India would not allow this to happen. Pakistan, in a dilemma, and committed to its goal to bring overwhelmingly Muslim Kashmir into the fold—*Azad Kashmir*, "Free Kashmir"

¹⁵ Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism*, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2005, p. 17.

¹⁶ Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 7.

¹⁷ Hassan Abbas, op. cit Page 17.

is how Pakistani-controlled Kashmir is described on Pakistani maps – and deeply aware of Indian military might, geographic size, economic strength against its own, and India’s anger at partition, focused on its military budget, increasing the power of the military and impoverishing the country.

Pakistan, afraid that the threat from India was growing constantly and aware that it could not fight on its own, was anxious to get arms from the United States. So desperate was Pakistan for American aid that General Ayub Khan, who in 1958 would become Pakistan’s first military dictator, told U.S. Secretary of State Henry Byroade in 1953, “Our army can be your army if you want us.”¹⁸

The U.S. military-Pakistani military relationship had begun. “The basic relationship with India was intellectual,” said U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, “in contrast to its relationship with Pakistan, which comes from the heart.”¹⁹

For the next six decades, there would be intermittent war in Kashmir, mostly secret, a mission, a religious war for Pakistan, and a war for territory for India against its upstart arch enemy. Pakistan would wage guerrilla war, creating and arming religious Islamic fundamentalist militias like Harkat-ul-Ansar tied to Jamiat-Ulema-i-Islami, a Deobandi political-religious party, and Hizb-i-Mujahideen, tied to its competitor, the arch conservative Jamaat-i-Islami political religious party, to fight its more powerful, better equipped Hindu neighbor.

The names of these militias would change, and there would be others, and some would become tied to al-Qaeda, but their goals, and those of the Pakistani army, would remain the same: the liberation of Kashmir. But the fundamentalist groups wanted something more and that is a pure Islamic government, as they wanted for all of South Asia.

“The liberation of Kashmir is a cardinal belief of every Pakistani. It is an integral part of Pakistan, and Pakistan would remain incomplete until the whole of Kashmir is liberated,” said Khawja Nazimuddin, Pakistan’s second Governor-General, after Ali Jinnah, in September 19, 1950.²⁰

Thousands of people would die, and elements of the many groups that would train and fight in Afghanistan, sometimes with al-Qaeda, and in Kashmir, would set off bombs in London and Mumbai, carrying their jihad far beyond Jammu and Kashmir.

I sat one night in Srinagar with Sidiq Wahid and his brother, Abdul, in the palace that once belonged to Nari Singh, now a hotel, overlooking Lake Dal. “The key here is that Islamist thinking has taken root in Kashmir,” said Wahid. “That is the real war between

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, op. cit, p. 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, op. cit, p. 38.

²⁰ Praveen Swami, op. cit, p. 1.

our old way of thinking and what is rising. Once the genie of fundamentalism is out of the bottle, and it is almost out in Kashmir, then it will be impossible to put back."

After the Soviet war in Afghanistan ended on February 15, 1989, there were many experienced fighters now available, and many went to Kashmir. The United States washed its hands of Afghanistan, and paid little attention to Pakistan with which it worked so closely, and would pay for its negligence.

I have never gone through such security at an airport as I did in Srinagar, seen as many soldiers or looked down the barrel of a mounted machine gun as I put my bag on a conveyor belt.

"The war against Islam emanates from the White House," said M. J. Akbar, back down in New Delhi. In addition to writing books, columns, and editing *Asian Age*, he is a fellow at the Brookings Institution. "Islamic, for most people, is not a pejorative word. Every organization in the West funds a conference titled Islam and the West. It is absurd. Islam is a religion, and the West is geography."

"The subtext is that the West represents all that is modern, and Islam represents all that is barbaric and dark. As for 'Islamic fundamentalism' the first '*intifada*,' shaking off in Arabic, or *uprising*, was in Mesopotamia in 1920-28. Anyone who fights western occupation today is a terrorist."

In 1760, as the Mughal Empire began to decline in India, a Muslim Indian cleric, Shah Waliullah, revered in Sunni Islam as a great modernizer and the bridge between medieval Islam and today, said that the reason for this decline was decadence. Muslims had become soft and turned away from the Qur'an.

He called for jihad, opposed imitation of the West, which then had relatively little influence in India, and called for Muslims to live simply and truthfully as Muslims did during the time of the Prophet. Khomeini would say almost the very same thing over 200 years later.

Waliullah went on "*hajj*," or pilgrimage, to Mecca in 1730 and then studied for a year in Medina. He was in Arabia during the time of Mohammed bin Abd al-Wahhab (1703-91), an itinerant preacher and the founder of Wahhabism, the sect to which Osama bin Laden belongs, and they may well have studied together. Wahhab preached that Muslims had become too worldly and must return to the Koran.

Mohammed bin Abd al-Wahhab's followers were called *Muwahhidun*, or Unitarians, because they believed in one God. They called themselves *Ikhwan*, or brothers. The Ottoman Turks, who then ruled Arabia, called them *Wahhabis* and likened them to the

Kharijites who in the 7th century separated from society to follow what they felt was the true Islam.

For centuries, probably since time immemorial, men have sought the true faith, purity, and strength away from the decadence and troubles of the modern world.

Mohammad bin Sa'ud, ruler of the Sa'ud tribe, formed an alliance with al-Wahhab and banned jewelry, gold, silk, music, dancing and poetry, all forms of decadence. Two centuries later, in the 1920s, his descendent, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, used Wahhabi soldiers to help him conquer Arabia and to create in 1932 Saudi Arabia.

Upon his return to India, Shah Waliullah preached on the oneness of God and the need to return to the Koran. After the British conquered Delhi in 1803, Waliullah's eldest son and successor, Shah Abdul Azziz, issued a "*fatwa*," or religious judgment, in which he said that Delhi had been enslaved by "*kuffr*," or paganism. Hindu India was now *dar al-harb* or "a house of war," and Muslims must return India to Islam.²¹

Waliullah and others brought Wahhabism, this harsh desert puritanical interpretation of Islam, to India, and his son, Shah Abdul Azziz, propagated it, along with such men as Sayed Ahmed of Rae Bareili (1786-1831), who returned from *hajj* in 1824 and called for a holy war against the Sikhs to restore the Punjab to Muslim rule. Unlike Wahhab, he did not have a military leader to help him.

The British were correct to describe the jihad against them as Wahhabi, just as a part of the jihad against the West today is Wahhabi.

THE DEOBAND

In 1866, a young searching Indian Muslim called Mahmud journeyed to a village called Deoband at the beginning of the foothills of the Himalayas, 120 miles north of Delhi, where he met a man, also called Mahmud, who became his teacher. There, according to legend, on May 30, young Mahmud sat in the Indian tradition in the shade of a pomegranate tree, and the older Mahmud began to teach him the Qur'an.

He studied for ten years and became the first student at what would become known as Darul Uloom, or "House of Learning," "*Dar al-ulum*" in Arabic, the madrasah at Deoband, second only to Al-Azhar University in Cairo in fame and prestige as a seat of Islamic learning. Deobandi teaching would spread throughout India and to Afghanistan.

²¹ Charles Allen, "The Hidden Roots of Wahhabism in British India," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, Summer 2005.

The Taliban trace their spiritual roots to Darul Uloom. I went there to see what I felt was the fountainhead of South Asian Islamic fundamentalism. It is more complicated, I found, than that.

“Have you found any terrorists here yet,” asked Adil Siddiqui, the madrasah’s elderly, genial public relations officer, a Darul Uloom graduate. He sat in the administration offices on the floor, his shoes off, a low simple desk in front of him. Other bearded men sat on the floor at their desks working or talking quietly.

“This is a spiritual institution,” said Siddiqui. “This area, which encompasses about 50 miles between the Ganga (Ganges) River and the Jamuna, is noted for its spiritual values. It is important for Hindus and Muslims alike.”

It took six hours to drive from Delhi to Deoband. The road outside of Delhi narrowed, and small villages and baked mud brick factories came and went. The road was filled with trucks, cars, bicycles, and carts, many filled with sugar cane, pulled by water buffalo. Women and little girls, with their backs straight, carried loads on their heads.

India’s economic rise, glorified in the West, is barely noticeable in the countryside. Over 850 million Indians live on \$2 a day or less.²² Muslims live at the low end of society.

The rural population of India in 2001 was 742 million,” said Dr. Ajai Sahni, the editor of *South Asian Intelligence Review*. Sahni has lectured in the United States and is considered an expert on terrorism in South Asia. I had visited him in his compound in New Delhi, where armed guards stood at the gate. “There will be 800 million in 2020. What do we do with all the people? Modernization is replacing labor.”

The government of India recently commissioned a report, the fourth since independence, on the state of Muslims in India: *The Report of the Prime Minister’s High Level Committee on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India*, called The Sacher Report after its chairman, retired Justice Rajindar Sachar. It has issued the following preliminary findings:

Over 60 percent of Muslims in rural areas do not own land. India ranks fourth in the world in the number of tractors, yet only 2.1 percent of Muslims have one. Only 1 percent has a hand pump. Nearly 60 percent of Muslims have never attended school; 3 percent go to madrasahs; 3 percent are college graduates; only 6 percent are policemen; and a low percentage work in government bureaucracies. Banks refuse to grant loans in some heavily-concentrated Muslim areas.

²² *Time*, March 26, 2007.

The majority of Muslims live in artisan, pre-industrial communities. They, while outside the Hindu caste structure like Christians, are generally the poor of India.

“Muslims in India are like African-Americans in America,” said Gautam Navlakha, a Hindu and co-founder of the human rights organization, “*People’s Union for Democratic Rights*.” A high percentage of Muslims are in prison. There is a sense of deprivation, of insecurity and sense that you will not receive justice if you are a Muslim.

There is a strong Hindu fascist element in this country. This, and a history of injustice and discrimination, give rise to Islamic fundamentalism.”

Navlakha was referring to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), or Indian People’s Party, one of the main political parties in India; to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Singh, (RSS) the National Volunteers Union; and to Bajrang Dal, a youth organization that wants to stop Christian missionaries from converting Hindus to stop Muslim population growth; and to find “Islamic fundamentalists” that it says are hiding among the population. The RSS led the riots against the Muslims in Gujarat in 2002.²³

“Muslims came here because this school provided shelter to them,” said Siddiqui. “Discrimination is natural in a caste-driven country like India.”

“The BJP reflects the same mind set of radical mullahs,” said Sahni. “Everyone feels discriminated against in India; everyone feels that he is a victim. There is a constant sense of loss here. There was the golden age of Hinduism, and India was once a land of milk and honey until the bloody Muslims came.”

To understand this history better, I went to see Dr. Indu Ignihotsi, for 25 years professor of history at Delhi University, now a senior fellow at the All India Democratic Women’s Association. “Afghanistan to India is by and large one contiguous region,” she said.

“India has long had trade links with Afghanistan. Long before the arrival of Islam, there were movements of peoples and tribes throughout this region. The communalist view – the idea that the state should be divided along ethnic or religious lines – is an attempt to interpret history from a religious, whether Hindu or Muslim, viewpoint.”

“The Deoband say there is one Muslim community, and the BJP and the RSS say there is one Hindu community. Westerners have tried to see India through a religious lens. Not all Hindus or Muslims are protesting.”

I met many Hindus and Muslims who, while deeply aware, like all Indians, of communalism, outwardly opposed fundamentalism of all types. The Indian middle

²³ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mumbai, India, February 24-March 2, 2007.

class, over 200 million, is the largest in the world. Everyone felt that Indian democracy provided an outlet for people's frustrations, and that the constitution guaranteed equality, although it was rarely practiced.

"The British, who came here to exploit us and to increase their own wealth, unlike Mahmoud, for example, who just came to plunder and then left, chose to see us through caste or religion, the only way they felt they could understand us, so as to rule us," said Ignihotsi.

Ancient Indians never saw themselves as Hindus or Muslims. The Indus River, the life's blood of Pakistan, was the center of what was called Sindu civilization. The Indus was called the Sindhus. The Persians could not pronounce the "S" and so it became Hind. The land on the other side of the Indus was Hind. The people were called Hind, from which comes Hindu.²⁴

The nation state is new. South Asia is still comprised of many tribes, interacting, trading, and fighting across borders with one another: the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example. Leaders use religion to rule them. Islamic fundamentalists like the Deobandi and like Syed Abul A'la Maududi, born in India and one of the most influential fundamentalist Muslim scholars in the 20th century particularly in the global jihadist movement, oppose nationalism, the nation state, secularism, and democracy.

"Islamic fundamentalism is one of the fundamentalisms we are facing," said Ignihotsi. "We are facing an aggressive Hindu fundamentalism also."

Hindu fundamentalism is, however, unlike Islamic fundamentalism, not international.

"There must be purpose in life," said Siddiqui. "All five fingers are not equal. Everyone has his own way of thinking. There are 40 places in the Koran where we are told to use our minds and follow our own thinking. People here have made it their aim to lead a religious life."

"The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of a martyr," said Mohammed.²⁵

Men have led religious lives for centuries. "*Whoever rejects a statement of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be unto Him), is on the brink of destruction,*"²⁶ said Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780 A.D.-855 A.D.), an anti-Shia, anti-Sufi theologian and perhaps the first, certainly the most famous, early Muslim fundamentalist.

²⁴ See also Thaper, *The Penguin History of Early India*.

²⁵ Popular Hadith, or traditional saying attributed to the Prophet Mohammed.

²⁶ Noah Han Keller, ed., *Reliance of the Traveler*, Dubai, Modern Printing Press, 1991.

Fundamentalism is a yearning for certainty, for an answer to despair, a desire for community, for peace, purity, God, a home and for eternal life. While fundamentalists, no matter what their religion, can be self-righteous, judgmental, even totalitarian, they have found purpose in life, happiness, and love among their fellow believers.

Muslim fundamentalists become angry, or saddened, by corruption and godlessness. They oppose abortion, evolution, feminism, homosexuality, alcohol, tobacco, and, to paraphrase former President Jimmy Carter and the Sermon on the Mount, *"lusting in one's heart."* They cover women from head to toe. They are poor and seek not money, but rather, the glory of God.

They reject popular music, in some cases, like the Wahhabis and the Taliban, any music, gambling, dancing, adultery, cheating, stealing, sloth, bragging, expensive clothes, make-up, or showing wealth: all that which shows pride and takes man away from God. They know it is wrong to despair of God's love and mercy, to think that man is safe from the wrath of God and to disobey your parents.

They believe that all other religions are of the Devil, he who takes man away from God, Satan, who tempts man, the outcast, the rebel, he is alcohol, he is gambling, he is a loose woman. Even the Bible says *"Be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."*²⁷

To Muslims, the Devil is a spirit who tempts man and thinks himself better than man. *"God asked, 'What has kept thee from prostrating thyself when I commanded thee?' Answered Iblis (the Devil) 'I am better than he (man): Thou has created me out of fire, whereas Him thou has created out of clay.'"*²⁸

The devil can be a Shiite or a Sunni; or anything Western: the United Nations, Western corporations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and especially the United States.

"Americans are the great Satan, the wounded snake," said Ruhollah Khomeini,²⁹ they who ignore or trivialize God.

"The little serpent has left, and the great serpent has come," said the Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada al Sadr, talking of the Sunni secular Saddam Hussein and the United States.³⁰

²⁷ 1 Peter 5:8.

²⁸ Al-Araf/The Heights 12 (The Koran).

²⁹ NBC-TV, December 8, 1986.

³⁰ 60 Minutes interview, May 30, 2004.

“Those who have attained to faith fight in the cause of God, whereas those who are bent on denying the truth fight in the cause of the powers of evil. Fight then, against those friends of Satan: verily, Satan’s guile is weak indeed.”³¹

Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-i-Islami (The Islamic Party), the most selective and probably the most prominent, certainly the most intense, fundamentalist political religious party in South Asia, and thus probably in the world, gave a speech on May 10, 1947, at Pathankot, India, his last before the partition of India. This speech, considered seminal by Jamaat, is published in booklet form.³² He said:

“Modern civilization, on which revolves the whole present-day organization of the world (intellectual, moral, cultural, political, and economic) is, in reality, based on three fundamental principles: Secularism, that is, irreligiousness or worldliness; Nationalism; and Democracy.”

Secularism was the western belief that “religion is a private affair between God and man,” the creed he called it of modern civilization. He said that Western man had developed a “hatred of the man-made theology of Christian missionaries—a theology which had become a curse for them and which forged their shackles.” It wasn’t the teachings of Jesus, but the religions that developed, that were at fault.

Catholics and Protestants had fought one another. People had killed in the name of the God. Out of this came the separation of church and state, the foundation of Western civilization. Religion had been taken out of public schools. Some leaders, Maududi said, didn’t even believe in God.

He saw nationalism, which was born in western man’s rejection of the “Popes and Caesars,” as a substitute for God, who had “already been ejected from his position under the impact of secularism.”

A nation’s moral standards became synonymous with its national interests. Virtue in the modern nation state was defined as what was advantageous to the nation, “. . . be it falsehood, faithlessness or disbelief, oppression, or any other act which may have been looked upon as the worst sin in the eyes of the old type of religion.”

The West defined evil as only by “what is injurious to the national interests, be they truth, justice, rights and obligations, or anything else which may hitherto have been considered a moral virtue.”

³¹ An Nisan/Women 4:76 (The *Koran*).

³² Syed Abul A’la Maududi, Markazi Maktaba Islami, “*Our Message*,” Ishaat-e-Islam Trust Publications, No. 526, Delhi, India.

Democracy, or “the sovereignty of the people,” came about, he said, as a result of man’s desire to loosen the oppressive grip of monarchs and feudal landlords over the masses. He found this laudable. What was wrong was that now “people of each country and territory are their own masters and rulers.”

God must rule, not man. Muslims must fight these three principles “with their whole strength.”³³

I mention Maududi because he is the most popular South Asian fundamentalist scholar of the 20th century and, with Sayyid Qutb the Egyptian theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood, has had more influence on militant Islamic fundamentalists than anyone else.

The Deobandi disagree with him in certain areas. Maududi had to quit his studies when he was 15 because his father was dying and he wasn’t able to acquire a good, formal madrasah education, the kind of which one would get at Darul Uloom, and the Deobandi felt this showed in his thinking.

They felt he cared more about achieving worldly power than leading a spiritual life. In some areas, such as in their opposition to nationalism, they were in agreement.

“We opposed the founding of Pakistan; we are opposed to nationalism,” said Dr. N.K. Afandi, the spokesman for Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, at its center, a complex of madrasahs for girls and boys, a large white mosque and publishing house near a poor, crowded area of New Delhi, like most Muslim enclaves where there are no tourists or taxis.

“Hind is the ancient name for India,” he said. This was before Hinduism held sway and its caste system was developed, before Pakistan and Bangladesh were created, before the Prophet Mohammed brought his final message of the one true universal faith. “We pursue our goals within the contextual framework of India. Pakistan is the creation of a very narrow thinking. Islam is an international faith,” said Afandi.

Afandi said they had nothing to do with Jamaat in Pakistan or Bangladesh. Journalists would tell me this is not true, but I was unable to verify this.

But back to the Deoband.

“Every year, in the month of Shawal, 10,000 men from around India take a test to be admitted to Darul Uloom,” said Saddiqui. “Many want to come from around the world, but cannot, because the government won’t issue visas.”

³³ *Ibid.*

The madrasah accepts 800 applicants each year. There are 3,500 students. Everything is free: food, lodging, classes. Age is no barrier. "A student can be 60 and his teacher 30," said Siddiqui. "A student can have four or five children and two wives, and his teacher may not even be married."

I saw one student with a gray beard, wearing reading glasses, lying on a charpoy, studying outside in the sun.

The first Shia madrasah was founded in Egypt in 1005. Its library is said to have had 6,500 books on architecture, astronomy, and philosophy. The first Sunni madrasah was founded in 1045 in Baghdad.³⁴ But Islam's great madrasah system of that period has changed, and now madrasahs around the world focus more on religion.

At least one scholar seems to feel that the madrasah system was important to Muslims under the British;³⁵ the British even started madrasahs to educate a class of clerks and managers for the East India Company.³⁶ On the other hand, madrasahs began to increase in popularity the more that Muslims felt the "Christian" British were destroying their culture.³⁷

In 1928, four years after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the last Caliphate, Hassan al-Banna, a school teacher, in Ismailia, Egypt, founded *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, the Society of Muslim Brothers, now known as the Muslim Brotherhood, a youth club to promote personal moral and social reform.

Al-Banna opposed British colonial rule and felt that this, along with the loss of the Caliphate, was destroying the pride of Egyptian youth. He advocated a return to the Koran and to the *Hadith*, the sayings of Muhammad, where Muslims would find the strength they needed to live good lives and to fight secularization and Westernization.

The Muslim Brotherhood, like the Deobandi and the Wahhabis, opposed the gap between rich and poor, built schools and health clinics, and created charities. The Brotherhood grew, fought the founding of Israel, which it considered a Western outpost forced on Muslims, and worked to create a Muslim country.

Sayyid Qutb became the Brotherhood's intellectual advocate. Qutb memorized the Koran at ten, but loved English literature. He received a Master's degree from what is now the University of Northern Colorado, but turned against the United States for what

³⁴ M. Ahmed, "Islamic Education Prior to the establishment of Madrasahs," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1987.

³⁵ Barbara D. Metcalf, Professor of History, University of California, Davis, "*Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs*," Social Science Research Council, New York.

³⁶ "Report of the Madrasah Education Committee," West Bengal, 2002; Government of West Bengal, Kolkata, India, p. 12.

³⁷ Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal*, p. 22.

he felt was its materialism and loose moral conduct. He was horrified to see a dance in a church.

America's God was money. *"In the United States, the leading country in the West, a man is valued according to the size of his bank balance,"* he wrote.³⁸

Qutb, like Maududi, believed that God was "Lord of the universe," to whom man must bow. He is unworthy before God. This goes to the heart of religious fundamentalism. Man must look to God, not to himself. Muslim fundamentalists look to God as their hope for salvation and not the "western religion" of democracy; democracy being a Greek word which means the rule of man not God.

Muslims have been arguing for over a thousand years over this Greek influence. *"We are at war with democracy,"* said Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on January 30, 2005, a day before the Iraqi election. *"Democracy is an evil principle."*

"As man reflects on this Divine care, he should feel humble," wrote Qutb. *"For he himself is worth very little in the kingdom of Allah, were it not for the care Allah takes of him and the honor He bestows on him."*³⁹

*"You shall rule among them in accordance with God's revelations to you. Do not follow their wishes and beware lest they divert you from some of God's revelations to you. Whose law is better than God's for those who have attained certainty?"*⁴⁰

The secular, socialist Egyptian leader Gamal Nasser tortured and executed members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Yet their faith — *"You cannot will except by the will of Allah, Lord of all the Worlds,"*⁴¹ — gave them strength. In 1966, Nasser executed Qutb and he became a martyr.

Why all this about the Muslim Brotherhood?

Osama bin Laden⁴² was drawn to the Muslim Brotherhood in college.⁴³ Egyptian Islamic Jihad, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, descended from the Muslim Brotherhood. Former Afghanistan Mujahideen president Burhanideen Rabbani, once a professor of Islamic studies at Kabul University, studied at Al-Azhar, where he read Qutb.⁴⁴

³⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, London: MWH Publishers, 1979, p. 53.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁴⁰ Al-Maidah/The Repast 5:48 - 50 (The Koran)

⁴¹ At-Takweer/The Darkening (The Koran)

⁴² Osama bin Laden, *Inside the Kingdom*, Warner Books, 2004, p. 70 -74.

⁴³ Peter Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2001.

⁴⁴ Author interview in Kabul, December 2006.

His books played a role in the creation of the Mujahideen and in the rise of the Taliban. Khomeini was influenced by Qutb and Maududi, as was Abdullah Azzam, the “emir of jihad,” who would become bin Laden’s professor and mentor in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Qutb and Maududi are the intellectual fathers of the global jihadist movement.

“This institution is supported by donations. It has never and never will accept money from any government,” said Siddiqui. Students get a one-month holiday during Ramadan, when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset to know what it is like for the poor to go without food, and, in self-denial, to come closer to God.

“The Saudis support the Deoband,” said Praveen Swami, New Delhi bureau chief for *Frontline*, Indian news weekly. “The money doesn’t have to come directly from the government. They can give money to someone working in Saudi Arabia who brings it back and gives it as a gift. It is easy.”⁴⁵

I asked Siddiqui about Wahhabi support, and he said he would look into it.

Darul Uloom is like a monastery and a university at the same time. As I walked through the campus, past the simple rooms where students live and study, I saw one room with a poster of a motorcycle on the wall. The temptation of the world. Students walked by carrying books. One came up to me, eyes bright, anxious to practice his English.

Siddiqui walked under archways and down narrow lanes, cool in the afternoon heat. A few women walked by, covered in black, without even their eyes showing. “This is how it should be,” he said. “Women here observe purdah so as not to tempt the students. All precautions should be taken to preserve morality.”

We walked outside the madrasah’s high red brick walls and down a narrow lane. The sun was hot. A few women covered in black walked by. I watched a young woman with her face exposed, and wearing a jeweled anklet, walk with a girlfriend and a student approach and glance over, but quickly turn away. She was the world, in all its sin and temptation. He was here to study and focus on God.

“We limit their (women’s) roles in public,” wrote Raid Qusti, a Saudi Arabian journalist in 2004 in the *Arab News*, *“ban them from public participation in decision making, we doubt them and confine them because we think they are the source of all seduction and evil in the world.”*⁴⁶

The word for woman in Arabic is “*hormah*,” which comes from “*haram*,” or prohibited.

⁴⁵ Interview with Praveen Swami, March 20, 2007, New Delhi.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Wright, “The Kingdom of Silence,” *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2004.

As I traveled through South Asia, I noticed as I have over the years how colorfully women dress in rural settings – whether they are Afghan *kuchi* (nomad) women with their dresses and silver jewelry; tribal women in the hills of Bangladesh with their scarves and lungis; or women from Ethiopia, high up in the Andes, or the far reaches of Tibet.

In 2003, in Ankara, I had dinner with a foreign policy analyst in Prime Minister Recep Erdogan’s AK (Justice and Development) Party. “Women like to make themselves pretty. It is natural,” she said. She wore a “*hijab*,” or scarf that covered her hair completely, and a dress covering her arms and legs. She talked about God’s love and the importance of prayer. She felt guilty shaking my hand, an unmarried woman touching a man.

Wahhabis, in their own interpretation of the Qur’an, forced women to wear the black *abbaya*, like the women at Deoband. “*O Prophet! Tell thy wives and their daughters, as well as all (other) believing women, that they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments (when in public); this will be more conducive to their being recognized (as decent women) and not annoyed.*”⁴⁷

The Qur’an does not say that a woman should be covered. “*And I say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty.*”⁴⁸

“We support the education of women,” said Siddiqui. “If a woman is taught, then the whole family learns. We oppose co-education. People will be tempted. This would put our morality in danger. Those who do not want education for girls are not following the teachings of Islam.”

Almost every man I talked to brought up the subject of women’s morality; almost to a man they were afraid that the more women were exposed to the West, the less moral they would become. The West was decadent, and their women needed to be protected from it.

“Islam emphasizes morality,” said Siddiqui. “We must not lose our character, the main pillar of Islam. The *maulavi* (madrasah graduate) must be a symbol of moral rectitude. Relations with a woman outside of marriage are immoral and an injustice. We give classes on the morality of men and women.”

The word “*ird*” in Arabic refers to a woman’s “sexual honor,” which must be preserved.⁴⁹ In Pashto, language of the Pashtuns, and thus the Taliban, the word is

⁴⁷ Al-Ahzab/The Confederates 59 (The *Koran*).

⁴⁸ An Nur/The Light 24: 31 (The *Koran*)

"ghairat." We don't talk about sexual honor in the West. In ancient, tribal societies it was important to control the woman because only a woman knew who the father was of her child. Property passed down through the father. Men tried to control women because women gave life.

In rural Afghanistan, the Pashtuns and the Tajiks, like the Baluch and the Pashtuns in Pakistan, keep women away from outsiders. Once a rural Pashtun girl reaches puberty, she almost disappears, never to be seen again by anyone outside her family or village, her extended clan.

In India in 2005, a Muslim named Imrana was raped by her father-in-law. Mufti Habibur Rehman of Darul Uloom issued a *fatwa* ordering her to now live with her father-in-law, in effect becoming the mother of her husband. She and her husband abided by the ruling.

Naseem Ali, a female member of the orthodox All India Muslim Personal Law Board established in 1972 to promote shariah in India, wrote, *"Her relationship with her husband is null and void. This is against the sanctity of the Koran. This is against the principles laid down."*⁵⁰

Author Rushdie, who is of Indian Muslim heritage, wrote that Darul Uloom, because of its fatwa, "teaches the most fundamentalist, narrow, puritan, rigid oppressive version of Islam anywhere in the world today."⁵¹

Islamic scholar Barbara Metcalf, Professor of History, University of California, Davis, and author of *"Islamic Revival in British India,"* has written that she considers the Deobandi movement to be "traditionalist Islamic activism"⁵²; others, less informed perhaps, or who live in the world of tracking militant Islam, see it as the intellectual center of jihadism.

"We are trying to make people know that Islam as a religion is the best model to shape the human society of modern days," said Hanifi, smoking a cigarette. "Yes, he said, "people find it disgusting that I smoke, but it is not banned in the Qur'an." We watched from a distance a group of young girls, dressed like young nuns, in white hijabs and long blue dresses, running around, laughing. They had a break between classes.

"Others simply preach about the rituals of Islam. We are different from traditionalist peoples," said Hanafi. By traditionalists, he meant the Deobandi.

⁴⁹ For the origins of the veil in Saudi Arabia, see Sandra Mackay, *The Saudis*; New York: N.W. Norton & Co., 1987, 2002, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁰ See *www.ndtv.com*. Ali wrote her comments on June 28, 2005.

⁵¹ *Toronto Star*, August 13, 2005.

⁵² *"Traditionalist" Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs,* New York: Social Science Research.

When I was in Kashmir, I met with Hameeda Nayeem, women's rights activist and Professor of English at the University of Kashmir. She wore a scarf. Her face was uncovered, her voice was strong, and she was not afraid to smile. She was committed to help women and to resolve the war in Kashmir.

"I was very conscious of women's rights as a girl," she said. "My parents wanted me to get married, but I wanted an education first. They were upset, but my father knew the Qur'an."

"Show me in the Koran where it says I must be married," I said. "Part of the Prophet's mission was to free women. Where does it say that anyone has the right to keep me down? If Islam is anything, it is an authority on freedom. It gives you total freedom. It is the so-called fanatics today who do the disservice to Islam."

"That is how I became involved in human rights. When you crave freedom for yourself and see colonial powers destroying it, as I have seen India crushing ours since my childhood, then I must act."

I asked her about the Dukhtaran-i-Milat (Daughters of the Nation or DM), a Kashmiri pro-Pakistani women's fundamentalist organization that wants to impose purdah on women. The Forum Against Social Evils (FASE), an offshoot of DM, burned Valentine's Day cards this year in Srinagar, calling the holiday "an agent of moral degradation."⁵³

"Purdah is not part of the fundamentals of Islam," she said. "I was the only one who wrote against them, saying this is not Islam. You cannot impose a code on anyone in Islam. If the Prophet was not given the authority to impose such a law, how can any petty person do this? I took the wind out of their sails."

Nayeem was in a rush. A man stood waiting to see her. She had written an article published in a Srinagar paper calling for a vote on whether Kashmir should be independent or a part of India or Pakistan. "Democracy has been the inner logic of history," she wrote. "It is the will of the people and not their leaders or politicians that finally triumphs at the end of the day."

Would that that were so. "Kashmir will fall into our hands like a ripe fruit," said Jinnah. That was 60 years ago. For the past 16 years, armed conflict, much of it generated by Islamic fundamentalists, has been common in Kashmir.

⁵³ See www.kashmirnewz.net.

Benazir Bhutto, as much as any Pakistani male leader, has been responsible for keeping the fire alive. She became, in 1988 at age 35, against the intense opposition of the clergy and of the army, the first woman prime minister of a Muslim country.

In the tough desert world of pre-Islamic nomadic Arab society, tribes often went hungry. Girls were considered a burden and often buried in the sand at birth. Mohammed stopped this custom. In Islam, as in Christianity, everyone, in theory, is equal before God. One reason that Wahhabis made women cover up was so that poor women, who could not afford nice clothes, did not feel inferior to rich women.

Yet the Koran states that *“Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the others, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them.”*⁵⁴ The Bible states *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.”*

The role of women in society divides not just fundamentalists from secularists, but is a contentious issue even in modern capitalist India. In New Delhi there are signs in the most modern hospitals and health clinics advising pregnant women that it is against the law to have a sonogram to see if her child is a boy or girl.

The Wahhabis want men to focus on God, not on women. The Taliban, following the *Qur'an* and tribal traditions, wanted women to stay close to home. *“And abide quietly in your homes and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of pagan ignorance.”*⁵⁵

Women in the countryside from Afghanistan to Bangladesh work all day, cooking, farming, cleaning, washing clothes in streams. An abbaya, burqa, or chador is for wealthier, urban women.

In 1600 Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to what became known as the East India Company, giving it a monopoly on British trade with India. The Dutch, French, and Portuguese were there already. By the early 19th century, Britain was the dominant European power in India.

In 1857, 47 of the 74 battalions in the Bengal army mutinied and held Delhi for four months and besieged the British Residency at Lucknow for five months, until suppressed. The rebellion was called the Indian Mutiny by the British, and the first War of Independence by Indians. Muslim soldiers and peasants led the rebellion, rallying around the aging Great Mughal in Delhi, the Emperor Bahadur Shah.

⁵⁴ An-Nisa/Women 34 (The *Koran*)

⁵⁵ Al-Ahzab/The Confederates 32:33 (The *Koran*)

The British put down the rebellion and convicted Shah of sedition. "The British hanged thousands of Muslims in Delhi," said Siddiqui. One historian called the British actions "grisly war crimes."⁵⁶ The East India Company was dissolved, and the British government took over governing India.

The rebellion occurred for many reasons, two of which were that Indians were afraid that the British wanted to impose Christianity and Christian laws on India. Muslims were afraid that the British had closed the madrasahs. They, who had ruled India for centuries, were afraid of losing their culture and religion, as the Taliban are today. Muslim fighters called themselves mujahideen or jihadis. Urdu documents referred to the British as kafirs (infidels) and nasrani (Christians).⁵⁷

"The U.S. war of independence was also a jihad," said M. J. Akbar. "George Washington was fighting a war against an invader, a colonizer, Cornwallis. It was a war against injustice (taxation without representation), and to protect your natural resources against colonization. France and Spain (and Russia) also occupied America."

"It was nine years after the War of Independence that this institution was founded," said Siddiqui. "It was for the revival of Islam."

In 1915, Mahmud, the first Deoband graduate, went to Kabul and begin preaching against British colonialism. It was not safe to agitate against the British in India. Maududi wrote that Indians should immigrate on mass to Afghanistan to wage jihad from there.

The Indian independence movement grew after World War I. Many of Darul Uloom's most prominent graduates worked with Mahatma Gandhi. "After driving the Britishers out, the voice of Islam could be raised because of the meritorious service of those who came from this institution," said Siddiqui.

Darul Uloom opposed the creation of Pakistan. They did not want to dilute the power of the Muslim community. "Before partition, students came here from around the world," said Siddiqui. "The first students were internationalists, and that tradition continues. Today our purpose is unchanged, to form religious citizens and to serve Islam, humanity, and the world. They form and mold others in the same pattern."

Muslims under British colonialism had lost their self-esteem. The British and the Hindus now ruled over them. The Darul Uloom website says, "Political decline had reduced Muslims to a state of helplessness and misery, distraction and anxiety; by the

⁵⁶ "The Last Mughal," by William Dalrymple, Penguin Viking 2006; page 15.

⁵⁷ Ibid. page 23.

establishment of Darul Uloom Deoband, they received equanimity, composure, and stability.”

Siddiqui introduced me to Maulana Ghooburrehman, age 97, Deoband’s vice chancellor. He wore a soft gray prayer cap and had a gray wispy beard which matched his eyes. He used a cane. His voice was strong. “Our students have always been law-abiding and humanitarians. We have nothing to do with the Taliban,” he said.

I was clearly not the first Westerner to visit. He knew what points he wanted to get across. In 2001, the vice chancellor at the time, Maulana Marghul Rehmani, said “*Darul-Uloom is the ideological fountainhead of the Taliban.*”⁵⁸

“Without a stint at Deoband, you are nothing in the jihadist world,” said Swami. “They all go there. The vast majority of the school’s graduates become clerics in mosques in small towns throughout South Asia. But many engage in violent activity. The curriculum at Darul Uloom focuses on religion, not on politics, but students talk with one another, exchange ideas. It is the hub of Islamic fundamentalism.”

“If a student goes to a university and becomes a communist, that does not mean that the university teaches communism,” said Siddiqui.

“In the 1960s, French universities may not have been teaching Maoism, but there was a student revolution in France in 1968,” said Swami.⁵⁹

“In 1994, Mohammad Masood Azhar, founder of Jaish-e-Mohammad (Mohammed’s Army), one of the most prominent militant Islamic fundamentalist groups in South Asia and whose goal he said was “to liberate Kashmir from Indian rule and to establish Islamic rule in Kashmir,” sought and received meetings with senior clerics at Deoband.⁶⁰

The Taliban’s ambassador at large, Rahmatullah Hashemi, said in March 2001 that “Every Afghan is a Deobandi,” ignoring the 20 percent of Afghans who are Shia. A tribal chief from Waziristan who is not religious told me in December, “We are all Deobandi.” An alcohol-drinking journalist I know in Peshawar said, “I was born a Deobandi.”

⁵⁸ The Pioneer, India, October 21, 2001.

⁵⁹ I went to school in Paris in the 1970s at l’Institut d’Etudes Politiques, where I took a class on Marxist thought. The French communist party received about 20 percent of the vote during that era in French elections. It was part of the fabric of French society. Students argued the merits of capitalism, communism, and socialism after class and in cafes late at night, as would students surely argue and discuss all aspects of Islam, and the meaning of jihad, at Deoband.

⁶⁰ Swami, p. 197.

The Deobandi Binori madrasah in Karachi, which looks like a small nondescript college campus with dormitories and classrooms, in a busy light industrial part of Karachi, is, according to some reports, where Mullah Omar attended and met Osama bin Laden.⁶¹

After September 11, 2001 (9/11), General Pervez Musharraf sent Mufti Niazamuddin Shamzai of Binori, with Lieutenant General Mahmood Ahmed, head of the ISI, to Kandahar to convince Mullah Omar to give up Osama bin Laden. Shamzai told Omar to wage jihad if the United States attacked.

Another Deobandi madrasah is the Haqqaniya Madrasah, a campus of striking white buildings in a new-Mughal style called Akora Kathak, on the road near Peshawar. Many Taliban leaders went there, including Jalaladin Haqqani,⁶² who takes his name from the madrasah. He is a leader in the anti-American insurgency in Afghanistan.

During over a quarter-century of Marxist rule and civil war, three million Afghans fled to Pakistan and two million fled to Iran. There were no schools available. Families in Pakistan, most of which were poor, sent their children to madrasahs.

In Afghanistan a madrasah can be one room in a village house where boys sit on a dirt floor, and a mullah teaches them Arabic and the Koran. In Pakistan it can be like a large American high school campus, with thousands of students. Some say there are 13,000⁶³ madrasahs in Pakistan; others disagree.⁶⁴

“We are not attached to any political party or to any political thought,” said the vice chancellor. “Our principle is the same as it has always been: to serve humanity and bring a message of peace. Only the U.S.A. is going against the thinking of Islam. It is the biggest terrorist in the world.”

The vice chancellor said that every man has his own views, and that those who built mosques and madrasahs along the Afghan-Pakistani border did not necessarily teach the views of Darul Uloom. “Each man has his own thinking. It is not required that we are similar. Each madrasah follows the thinking of its founder.”

I would learn in the weeks ahead that Pakistani General Zia ul-Haq would establish madrasahs all along the Afghan-Pakistani frontier to create soldiers for the war in Afghanistan.

“I want to send a message of peace to all human beings—and the United States should

⁶¹ Abbas. Op. cit, p. 221.

⁶² I lived with Haqqani and his group of Mujahideen in Paktia Province, Afghanistan, in 1981.

⁶³ *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, International Crisis Group, April 18, 2005, p. 8.

⁶⁴ *Religious school enrollment in Pakistan: World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 3521.*

cease this false propaganda against Islam and stop demonizing Muslims. The teachings of Islam are totally against terrorism. We don't have any relationship with the Taliban," said the vice chancellor.

Barbara Metcalf wrote, referring to Ambassador Hashemi's statement, that "Every Afghan is a Deobandi," "*This comment may be disconcerting to those familiar with the school in its Indian environment where its ulama – those learned in traditional subjects and typically addressed as "maulana" – were not directly engaged in politics and were primarily occupied in teaching and providing both practical and spiritual guidance to their followers.*"

Saddiqui walked me to my car, pointing out a giant gray white mosque with cupolas and minarets, rising high over the campus. "We are expanding the mosque because we have more students than before. It is called the Taj Mahal of Deoband." He smiled.

The Taj Mahal was built by Shah Jahan, a Mughal emperor, as a mausoleum for his second wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Jahan was not a fundamentalist.

"Each student is required to pray five times a day. They rise at five, pray, have breakfast, and go to classes from 6:30-10:30 and from 2:30-4:30. "Each student is here for 12 years. They study math, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English, some science, geography and social studies, and they memorize the *Koran*. Students become Qari's: experts in the recitation of the Holy *Koran*," said Saddiqui.

"Then follows more study of the *Koran*, and the *Hadith*, the thousands of written sayings of the Prophet, which are not in the *Koran*, Islamic law, called *fiqh*, and logic. We now teach computer skills, and journalism. We know we must adjust to the modern world."

PARTITION

On August 15, 1947, at midnight, mother India was divided in two countries, according to religion. It is a festering sore in South Asia today. Over seven million Muslims went to Pakistan, and an approximate equal number of Hindus went from the newly-formed Pakistan to India.

Pictures from that time show emigrants packed onto trains, riding on top and leaning out windows. There was a breakdown of law and order. Hundreds of thousands, probably well over a million, people were killed as Hindus and Muslims slaughtered one another.

"There will be a time when Pakistan, Hindustan (India), Bangladesh, and Baluchistan (a province in Pakistan) will become more of a federation than separate countries. Culturally we are all the same," said Siddiqui.

We went to the madrasah's guest house for lunch. As we ate, he surprised me by going to the very heart of fundamentalist Islam. "Every Muslim wants that all the comfort in life, all the facilities, should be removed, so that they can be closer to God," he said. "All they want to do is die. Some become suicide bombers. Islam is not in favor of life. This life is temporary. Only life after death is permanent. We must prepare for that life."

Normal things do not matter, a good job, family, big house, the so-called American dream means nothing to one who knows that life is only, as one man put it, an examination hall. The purpose in life is to prepare for Judgment Day, to be a good Muslim, knowing that your real home is not on earth, but in Heaven.

"Fundamentalism is a misconception. Everyone is a fundamentalist," said Siddiqui. "You need to have certain principles. We are attached to those of our Holy Book, just as one who is attached to the Holy *Bible* is a fundamentalist. To use the phrase Islamic fundamentalist is an attempt to defame Islam and the image of Islam."

"Islam and Christianity are different religions and have been at loggerheads—he smiled, happy to use this colloquialism—from the beginning. After 9/11, Mr. Bush said this is 'a *salabi jang*,' a crusade." *Salib* means cross in Arabic. A crusader war.

"Jihad means effort, to, for example, make ourselves better and to seek and get a job. It can mean to fight against those who are against us. We teach jihad here in the true sense of the word. It is a weapon of self-defense. So it was against the British in 1857."

The root word in Arabic is *jhd*, meaning to strive, to struggle.

"Jihad means war," said Akbar. It is not evil; it means to fight against injustice; it is an answer to injustice. It is a matter of just war."

That afternoon, before I left, Siddiqui took me to Darul Uloom's first mosque, a simple room with a low ceiling, a few overhead fans, a colored tile minbar, from which the Imam would deliver his sermon, and simple carpets and straw mats on which to pray. Students came close to us, listening, watching. Siddiqui pointed to a marble urn, filled with dirt and a few sprouts of grass.

"This is where the pomegranate tree stood."

He seemed happier standing there than he had pointing out the large new grandiose mosque the madrasah was building.

A few days later I went to the Jamia Millia Islamia, or National Islamic University, created in 1920 by Indians as a nationalist university. The British refused to recognize its

degrees. There were trees, lawns, red sandstone buildings, and female students in jeans, laughing, like college girls anywhere. The library is funded by Saudi Arabia.

“There is a strong assertion of Islamist identity in this country,” said Professor Mushirul Hasan, the vice chancellor. “It is a realization and recognition among Muslims that the world has been unkind to them. There is a disgust with our own government; at the absence of democracy in Pakistan; the stranglehold of the bureaucracy and of the army.

Muslims are angry at America. Today it is Palestine, tomorrow it may be Chechnya. There is a sense of being part of a beleaguered global community,” he said.

To be a Muslim is to be a part of the *ummah*, the community of Muslims, a brotherhood and sisterhood that now extends around the world.

“I am not a believer,” said Hasan. “I feel myself getting caught up in a dilemma. I assert my own identity until my good senses prevail. To be a Muslim is a cultural identity, part of a large minority, a backward poor.”

I asked why there wasn't more violent Islamic fundamentalism in India.

“It is because of the strength of democracy. People can vote and can demonstrate,” he said. They have an outlet.

India's Congress Party, the party of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his daughter Indira Gandhi (not related to Mahatma Gandhi), is today led by a Christian, the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, the widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's son. He was killed May 21, 1999, by a Tamil suicide bomber.

The bomber was protesting Indian actions in Sri Lanka. Some analysts say that suicide bombings began then. The first suicide bomber in recent times was a former Arab-Afghan who fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s. In November 1995, he blew up himself and a part of the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad.

The Tamil bomber approached Gandhi carrying flowers. She was a Hindu. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam represents the minority Tamil population on largely Buddhist Sri Lanka. In the 1990s, the Tamil Tigers killed thousands of people using suicide bombers. Maybe she, and they, learned from the Arab-Afghan.

The president of India is a Muslim. The prime minister is a Sikh. Sonia Gandhi is the most popular politician in India.

“Muslims have participated in nation-building,” said Hasan. “I am not saying there is not a sense of alienation, of fundamentalism, fear of Hindu militancy, but Muslims are

not prone to fundamentalist fury. They have developed a stake in the economic changes sweeping the country. The leadership must fight for affirmative action and ensure it."

I asked what fundamentalist Islam meant to him.

"The fundamentalist movement is a reaction to outside forces, mainly European, mainly British colonialism. It was the United States which fostered its modern creation in the war against the Soviet Union."

"There is very little religion in what is called Islamic fundamentalism, mostly politics. The underlying desire is to preserve and defend Islamic traditions, one's lifestyle, and to be a part of this nation-building; Gujarat notwithstanding, this is a secular society where people live as they do in America or Sweden."

There is a new modern subway in New Delhi, and hospitals and medical clinics that draw Americans and Europeans. There are the famed technology centers. Every day there are stories in the newspapers about the success of Indian businessmen in the international arena. There are 36 billionaires in India now, according to *Forbes*,⁶⁵ more than in Japan.

Yet there is massive unrelenting poverty and, in spite of affirmative action, a caste system that still exists. Over 65 percent of the country's computers are found in only eight cities. "When Islamic fundamentalism dies down, Maoism will be the next big thing," said Sahni.

The papers today are filled with stories not of a train to Pakistan being bombed, of a jihadi attack in Kashmir, or a train bombing in Mumbai, but of how 350 Maoists attacked a forested police camp and killed 65 policemen in a two-hour battle in Chhattisgarh.

It is class warfare. Maoists, like militant Islamic fundamentalists, like Tamil Tigers, want to create a more equal, moral and better world, and believe they have the answer.

Mohammed said, "There can be no compulsion in religion." People must come to it of their own accord. The Deobandi and the Jamaat will spread the gospel.

Before I left Darul Uloom, I asked Siddiqui how he felt about the future. Students crowded around him, listening. "Islam will continue to grow in Asia, Europe, the U.S.A., South America, and South Africa. These places will flourish with the teachings of Islam. Our students are optimistic about the grand future of Islam and will go out and preach, and the number of followers of Islam will increase day by day."

⁶⁵ Forbes 2007 list of world's richest people.

“The democratization process in India is one of the great miracles of the 20th century,” said Akbar, a practicing Muslim married to a Hindu. “Certainly India is an economic success. Muslims know that the answer lies in the theory of the Indian state.”