

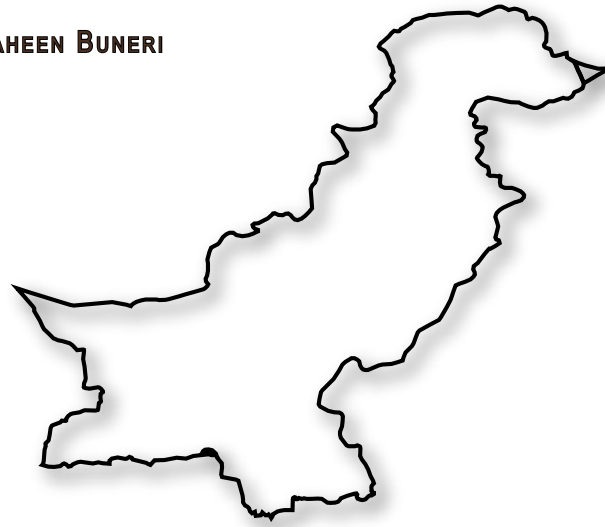


# SWAT VALLEY- THE METAMORPHOSIS

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About Tribal Analysis Center

# Swat Valley- The Metamorphosis

*By Shaheen Beneri*

My friend, Parkash, is a 35-year old Hindu with strong historical, emotional and cultural connections to Swat Valley because he was born, educated and married here. The beautiful Swat valley is his home, like it is the home of the Yusufzai Pashtuns who have lived here for the last several hundred years.

In 11<sup>th</sup> century, Swat was attacked and occupied by Mehmud Ghaznavi, a controversial Muslim ruler from Ghazni in present day Afghanistan. The legend says he defeated Raja Geera, a ruler of Hindu Shahi Kingdom, near Udigram, a town in lower Swat Valley. During his reign, Pashtun tribes like the Dilazak and Swatis settled in the valley. The large Yusufzai Pashtun tribe, who are predominantly Muslim, occupied the land they currently occupy in 16<sup>th</sup> century and forced the Dialazaks and Swatis to leave the area, but differences remained in the population.

For example, the Muslims and Hindus in Swat belonged to two distinct religions- Muslims believed in the unity of God and resurrection after death, while Hindus worshiped hundreds of deities and believed in reincarnation. In economic terms Hindus were more prosperous as they possess big businesses, while the local Muslim population consisted mainly of farmers and depended on agricultural products for their survival.

Swat once was celebrated as the glorious center of Gandahara civilization, a valley of stunning natural beauty, land of heart-warming romantic tales and historically a transit point for goods and ideas between China and the Indian ports. Recently, the economic and strategic importance of Swat Valley has increased manifold. The valley of Swat is located at the juncture of Hindu Kush and Karakorum mountain ranges. Across the Hindukush, United States and NATO forces are engaged in a bloody conflict with Al-Qaeda and Taliban while beyond the Karakorum lies China, a country of huge economic and political significance in the modern day power politics.

Apart from the US and China, the valley also attracts regional strategic interests and according to some experts it is “The Strategic Capstone”<sup>1</sup> of the new great game.

Until 1000 A.D the area along Hindu Kush was part of the Hindu cradle. The ranges mainly run through Afghanistan and Pakistan and divide the Amu Darya River Valley and Indus River Valley.

Like many of Swat’s Hindu population, Parkash owns a business in a town in lower Swat. To enjoy some lighter moments after his work, he joins his childhood friends who are Sunni Muslims and they talk, laugh and have their evening meal together. Sometimes when they have time, they organize a music gathering in Marghzar, an alpine valley of stunning beauty, which is close to Mingora, the administrative capital of Swat valley.

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1. ([http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/6\\_4/Dialogue\\_October\\_December2011\\_356-366.pdf](http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/6_4/Dialogue_October_December2011_356-366.pdf))

With Rabab, a two string musical instrument with hollow wooden body that is very popular among the Pashtun tribes and used in music gatherings that are not complete without its' soothing and intoxicating tunes, in his lap, a folk singer looks at Parkash and sings a Pashto Tappa<sup>2</sup> in his melodious voice:

*Yar Mi Hindu Za Musalman Yam: Da Yar Da Para Daramsal Jaro Kawoma*

(My darling is a Hindu, I am a Muslim: To make him happy, I have become the sweeper of a Hindu Temple.)

Parkash feels the warmth of love and sacrifice in these two short lines, smiles and looks at the singer with thankful eyes. Parkash knows so many Pashto *Tappas* by heart which he learned from friends and elders in his family.

The serene environment, natural beauty and romanticism of Swat Valley make an ideal setting for creative and artistic expressions. Music is interwoven in the souls and psyche of the people. They enjoy music on every joyous occasion, wedding ceremonies and harvest of crops. In Mingora, *Banr*<sup>3</sup> is famous for its celebrated musicians and dancing girls.

Under the patronage of Miangul Abdul Haq Jehanzeb, the *Wali* (Ruler) of Swat from 1949 until merger of Swat State into Pakistan in 1969, cultural festivals were held along the banks of River Swat, where these musicians, singers and dancers performed. The festivals were cultural spaces where cultural and artistic activities were shared and played an important role in the promotion of local arts and crafts. Marriage between the landed class and the artists' families were rare, however, but the *Wali* shattered this taboo by marrying one of the dancing girls.

Once, unknowingly, I asked Parkash when his family settled in the valley. "Look, we have been here for centuries. We are sons of the soil. You are converts", he corrected me firmly. According to estimates by Pakistan's Hindu Council, there are more than 7,000,000 Hindus currently living in Pakistan, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and in the Tribal Areas. Once their population was larger, but now 1167 members of Hindu community live in Buner, 66 in Upper Dir, 72 in Lower Dir, 474 in Swat, 42 in Shangla, 426 in Malakand Agency, 18 in Kohistan, 351 in Battagram and 216 Hindus live in Manshera district.

As mentioned previously, the Yousafzai tribe of the Pashtuns occupied Swat in 16th century after forcing Dilazaks and Swatis to the eastern banks of Indus River. Their society was based on "a pastoral-nomadic egalitarian social philosophy". They practiced certain customs and traditions and were primarily secular in nature. They lived in an "honor based society" in which family lineage was important and every member of the society was in competition with another but under the code of the Pashtuns, or Pashtunwali, everyone was bound to honor and perform their social obligations.

After partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan, some Hindu and Sikh families migrated to India, but most of them refused to leave as they felt secure in this mountain outpost. At that time Swat was a princely State with internal autonomy and an effective judicial and administrative system.

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2. *Tappa* is a composition of two unequal meters in which the first line is shorter than the succeeding one. It is the oldest and most popular genre of Pashto folk literature that reflects Pashtun social, cultural and spiritual life and their nationalistic and aesthetic values in an elegant and amusing manner.

3. *Banr* is the traditional home of singers and dancing girls in Swat Valley. It is situated in the center of the city and played the role of an unofficial academy of music and performance arts.

Miangul Abdul Wadud and Miangul Abdul Haq Jehanzeb, the rulers of Swat, governed the State under local customs called *Riwaj*,<sup>4</sup> but in most cases *Riwaj* was more powerful than the religious injunctions. Importantly, the judicial system of Swat was not Islamic in its essence as is commonly believed<sup>5</sup>. It was a synthesis of the traditional codes, Islamic norms compatible with the traditional codes, and the commands, orders and words of the ruler.

Traditionally, the cleric or mullah lived on the margins of the society; he only led prayers, solemnized marriages and organized recital gatherings of the Holy Book. He was not supposed to be a member of the *lashkar*, the tribal army, or the *jirga*, the tribal council. He did not own land, except a piece of land given by the local communities from their shared property. He had no concern with worldly affairs and was expected to dedicate himself to religious practices.

The Muslim population in the valley followed the moderate Sufi<sup>6</sup> tradition of Islam and had a great veneration for Sufi shrines. Teachings of the Saints were based on love and humanity, and incidents of religious discrimination were very rare in Swat. Sufis missionaries arrived on the scene around 800 years ago, and were originally pious devotees, whose poor woolen clothes showed their humility. “Sufi” comes from the Arabic word for wool. Above all, the Sufis sought the divine reality or ultimate truth that stands above all the illusions and deceptions of the material world. In order to achieve ecstatic union with God, they incorporated techniques of sound and movement -- chanting and music, swaying and dance. Believers joined in tight-knit brotherhoods or *tariqahs* (Traditions), each following a charismatic leader (*shaykh*).<sup>7</sup> They presented an Islam that incorporated local traditions and worship styles, including Christian saints and Hindu gods.

Elderly men and women in Swat still recount stories about the times when village girls would walk the long way through rocks and mountains to the Shrine of Pir Baba. “This was both a spiritual journey and a recreational activity that gave women a chance to step out from behind the four walls of their houses, share joys and sorrows and breathe in the open air.” an elder at Salampur village said, adding his view that the new brand of Islam in the valley had deprived them of everything that was once beautiful in their society.

These Sufi shrines were also cultural centers where every year music and sports festivals were held. The festivals provided a platform to the people for their romantic and aesthetic expressions and spiritual emancipation. In fact the whole Pashtun belt in Pakistan and Afghanistan is dotted with Sufi Shrines but in the recent past these shrines came under attack from the militants. For example, the Taliban desecrated the shrine of Hazrat Sayyad Ali Tirmizi, commonly known as Pir Baba in neighboring Buner district and locked the doors of the Mausoleum. Additionally in April 2009, the Taliban affiliated with Mullah Fazlullah crossed the Elum<sup>8</sup> valley and occupied the Pir Baba Shrine in Pacha Kalay village.

A tribal *lashkar* of locals posed a strong resistance to Taliban fighters and a bloody conflict ensued. The conflict left 16 Taliban fighters, three policemen and two members of the local militia killed. However, when the *lashkar* members realized that no support was coming from the Pakistani authorities they withdrew and later left their homes due to fear of Taliban attacks.

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4. *Riwaj* means customs or tradition in English. It is basically meant a combination of Pashtunwali and Shariah, a judicial system based on the religious scriptures or Islamic Jurisprudence.

5. ([http://www.valleyswat.net/literature/papers/Administrative\\_System\\_of\\_Swat.pdf](http://www.valleyswat.net/literature/papers/Administrative_System_of_Swat.pdf))

6. Most of the people in Swat and Buner valleys followed the Chishti tradition of Sufi Islam.

7. (<http://www.countercurrents.org/shekhawat280511.htm>)

8. Elum is a legendary mountain between Swat and Buner Valleys. It is also very sacred for the Hindus.

The Taliban attack on Pir Baba shrine was in fact an assault on the centuries old cultural and spiritual traditions of the people of the area. The shrine is located close to a grand mosque with a courtyard made of white marble. In the nearby marketplace named Pir Baba Bazaar, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus own shops and businesses and is both a cultural center and a hub of trade and economic activity. Every year hundreds of devotees from different parts of the country visit the place to pay homage to the Sufi saint, buy souvenirs and hold musical gatherings.

Like other Hindus, Parkash was also a visitor of the Shrine. But all these activities were forbidden under the Taliban extremist version of Islam.

Apart from the Sufi Shrines, there are more than 100 known Buddhist sites and several other heritage sites in Swat Valley which are sacred for the Hindus and Sikhs. Until 1980s, Hindu pilgrims would visit *Shalbandai*, a village in the lower Buner Valley to pay homage to their sacred site located at the outskirts of the village in the midst of an open field. The village people would extend hospitality to the guests and the pilgrims would distribute cooked rice and sweets among the locals.

My Hindu friend, Parkash, told me about his parents and grandmother's visits to this Hindu site. But now everything was changing around him and mutual love and communal harmony was reaching the verge of extinction because of the spread of Taliban's restrictive Wahabbi Islam that rejects knowledge not clearly rooted in the Quran and Islamic legal thought. In 2007, pro-al-Qaida Taliban militants under the leadership of Fazlullah<sup>9</sup> occupied Swat Valley and he changed this valley of love and music into a vale of death and destruction by broadcasting fiery speeches on his pirated FM radio.

In Swat Valley, the Taliban had yet to find time to start with large scale persecution of minorities like they did in Khyber and Orakzai Tribal Agencies. But by dynamiting a 20- foot high meditating Buddha<sup>10</sup> carved on a mountain in the vicinity of Jehandabad village in Swat, they gave a strong message to the followers religions other than Islam.

In 1992, after the demolition of Babri Mosque by extremist Hindus in Ayodhya, a city in the Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh, a state in northern India with more than 31 Million Muslims, the local situation worsened. The Mosque had been constructed by the Mughal Emperor Babar in 1527. The land, on which the mosque was constructed, was also considered sacred by Hindus who claimed that their old place of worship was destroyed to construct the mosque. To protest the demolition of the mosque, demonstrations were staged in different parts of Pakistan. This was an ideal opportunity for the local extremist religious groups to fan hatred and fanaticism while increasing their influence among the people.

In response to extremist agitation over the Babri Mosque, in *Ghaligay* village of Swat a beautiful carving of a meditating Buddha was attacked and disfigured by an angry mob. It was a 4-meter high Buddhist statue carved out of marble stone at the foot of a rocky slope along the main road that connects Swat Valley with the plains of Pakistan. The angry mob also damaged Hindu and Sikh temples in Buner.

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9. Fazlullah never graduated from a religious seminary, however he draws his religious inspiration from his father-in-law, Malauna Sufi Muhammad who launched a movement for the enforcement of Shariah in Malakand region (of which Swat is a district) in early 1990s.

10. The Jehanabad carving was a 1500- year old rock carving and was considered as the second largest Buddhist site in South Asia after the Bamyana Buddha. The Bamyana Buddhist statues in Afghanistan were destroyed by Taliban in March 2001.

The demolition of the temples in Buner was initiated by Maulana Dua Noor, a cleric who belonged to the Panjpiri<sup>11</sup> sect of Wahabism. After the death of Maulana Muhammad Tahir, his son Maulana Tayyab became the chief of this organization who also manages a huge religious seminary in the town of Panjpir. Muhammad Amir, another brother of Maulana Tayyab was a major in Pakistan Army and worked for Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), the country's spy agency in 1980s. Major Amir allegedly conspired and collaborated with others to topple the democratically elected government of the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1989.<sup>12</sup>

The organization has now more influence both in the plains and mountains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and militant commanders like Mangal Bagh Afridi of Khyber Agency and Fazlullah of Swat are the staunch followers of the Panjpiri organization. This organization strongly discourages visiting shrines and equates it with *Shirk* (Polytheism). Under this belief Sufi shrines are under continuous attacks from different militant groups in the tribal region and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The emergence of the Panjpiri Movement give birth to a new breed of religious zealots who tried to impose their own interpretation of religion on the people and did not bother about the old traditions. Before the rise of militant Islam, the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims lived side by side in one neighborhood and contributed to each other lives in several ways. For example, every year during Eid festivals Hindus and Sikhs would wear new clothes in solidarity with the majority Muslim population. On wedding feasts the locals would prepare special non-beef food for their Hindu guests out of respect for their religious faith. These liberal ways of life bridged their religious differences and helped in the growth of a society where honor and properties of all were protected under Pashtunwali. This is a way of life that is governed through the unwritten code of life of the Pashtuns. It is both an ethical and social code that is based on honor, revenge, chivalry, hospitality, asylum, protection of women and support for the weak or defeated. While it is pre-Islamic, Pashtunwali is still practiced by Pashtuns in their society and this code is the key stone of the arch of the Pashtuns' social fabric.

Behroz Khan, a senior US-based journalist from Buner Valley, narrated an interesting story of Hindu-Muslim communal harmony and protection that was provided to the minorities in the Pashtun society. He said that once in his village, a local Hindu named Saroop Kumar was blamed for having illicit relations with a woman from the *Gujar*<sup>13</sup> community and the reports of the alleged relationship instigated anger and people from the community surrounded the police station where Saroop Kumar was jailed.

In order to save Kumar's life, local elders intervened and asked the police to avoid handing over Kumar to the mob. The police officer addressed the angry mob and said that Kumar would be taken to the court and the case would be decided under the law. Kumar was saved, and according to Khan, he is still living along with his expanded family in Purbaba town of Buner.

In 1980s, the Afghan Jihad triggered radicalization in the Pashtun Society. In order to recruit fighters for the Jihad, a network of Arab-sponsored religious seminaries was established with encouragement from Pakistani authorities and fighters trained in these seminaries would be sent

11. Panjpir is a town in Sawabi district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In 1939, a religious scholar Maulana Muhammad Tahir from Panjpir, formed an organization by the name of "Jamaat-e-Ishaat-e-Tauheed Wa Sunnah"(JITS), to preach "pure Islamic teachings". According to JITS official website, the organization's "Main objective is to preach Islamic faith in the Oneness of Allah and tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), as a code of life and also to alienate them from polytheism (Shirk), fabrication in Islam (Bida) and un-Islamic rites and rituals, from the Holy Quran" (<http://www.panjpir.org>).

12. Major Amir, the ISI officer, was deeply involved in Operation Midnight Jackal, intended to remove Benazir Bhutto from the prime minister position through a no confidence vote in parliament. Funds for buying votes were allegedly provided by Osama Bin Laden.

13. The Gujars are a small ethnic Muslim community living in the hilly areas of Buner, Swat, Dir, Shangla and Kohistan. In the plains of Punjab they are found in higher numbers. In most cases they live like gypsies and move from one place to another along with their sheep.

across the border to fight communist forces in Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan introduced a conservative brand of Islam and a Kalashnikov-based culture into the Pashtun society. State support to the Jihadi groups continued that concluded with the formation of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Pakistan Taliban Movement or TTP in 2007.

These neo-Taliban were hostile to the evolutionary Pashtun socio-cultural order. They wanted to forcefully replace it with their own version of narrow and extremist interpretation of religion and life and their main goal was fight US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, target their allies and establish a true Islamic order in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In the emerging hostile situation, my Hindu friend Parkash was uncertain about his future and now he stayed at home most of the time. He received phone call from unknown people warning him that they knew about his heretic life and if he did not mend his ways he would face consequences for it.

“Every time they humiliate me and say bad things about the women of my family. I have become an alien in my own home. Do they think I have no sense of honor?” he asked with his voice trembling with anger.

In Pashtun society hurling abuses is a gross violation of Pashtunwali and it usually results in enmities that continues for years and claim many lives. When Parkash asked did he possess no sense of honor, he was, in fact, referring to this aspect of the society where dishonor to the family is never left unavenged. But he was as helpless as the majority of the people in the face of this faceless and heartless enemy.

Parkash knew that when the Taliban were slaughtering their own brothers in faith, why should they feel mercy for those who belong to a different religion? This was a glaring reality that kept Parkash terrified. To have some relief from the pains of emerging terrifying environment, he would secretly leave the area to stay with friends in Peshawar and Islamabad for few days, but Swat would attract him soon and he would return home.

When the conflict between Pakistan security forces and Fazlullah’s militants displaced 2.3 million people from the region in 2008, Parkash and his family also moved to cities in the plains of Pakistan. After the conflict some of the Hindus and Sikh families returned to their homes in Swat, but I never heard from Parkash again.

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## **The Metamorphosis of SWAT Valley**

The merger of Swat state into Pakistan in 1969 left behind serious constitutional and judicial crisis that further widened gaps between the landed and landless classes, the two main social groups formalized by the Swat State in 1917. This played the role of catalyst in shifting the authority from the traditional leadership to the religious class.

The people who were used to the speedy resolution of their feuds and family issues under the legal and social framework of the pre-merger Swat felt frustrated with delay of justice in Pakistani courts, and the rampant corruption in government institutions broke their trust in the State. Contrary to the traditional Pashtun leadership who focused on issues of community development and conflict resolution through Jirga, an elders’ council, the religious leadership was working on a global agenda involving the enforcement of Shariah, based on the Wahabbist Interpretation of Islam, and liberating Muslim lands from “infidels” through Jihad.



In the post-merger Swat, religious-political parties like Jamat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamait-ul-Ulame-e-Islam (JUI-F) arranged special gatherings, study circles and produced Jihadi literature to persuade youth for Jihad in Kashmir and Afghanistan. In 1980s and 1990s Islami Jamait Talba (IJT) the student wing of Jamat-e-Islami established their organizations in educational institutes and held big student gatherings. The students trained in these gatherings were well versed in global Islamic movements and had no or little knowledge of the importance of their own cultural traditions and social history. They later became officials in the government departments and some of them opted for Jihad in Kashmir. In the Islamic center run by Jamiat-e-Islami near Peshawar, a list of JI Kashmir Martyrs is displayed. In this list a number of “martyrs”, belong to Dir, Swat and Buner districts of Malakand region.

Sufi Muhammad, chief of the Movement for the Enforcement of Shariah in Malakand (TNSM), was also an active member of Jamat-e-Islami but in 1989 he developed differences with JI and formed the TNSM. Sufi Muhammad termed Western democracy as unIslamic, demanded the promulgation of Islamic Shariah and threatened civil disobedience if his demand for Islamic order is not honored. Sufi Muhammad received his religious education from Maulana Muhammad Tahir, the Amir of Jamaat-e-Ishaat-e-Tauheed Wa Sunnah (JITS) and father of former ISI agent Major Amir who worked as a catalyst to promote the TNSM in Malakand Division through his father’s seminary in Panjpir which was then run by his brother Maulana Muhammad Tayyib.<sup>14</sup>

In 1994, the whole Malakand region was pulsating with the chants of “Shariah or Shahadat,” SHARIAT or MARTYRDOM and TNSM activists were holding gatherings that became protest demonstrations and the whole region was confronted with a socio-economic crisis. Earlier they had given several deadlines to enforce Shariah but the government did not respond. This time they blocked main roads connecting Peshawar with Swat and Buner valleys on two different points. The officials held negotiations with them but they remained adamant and were not ready to return to their homes without having Shariah implemented.

The Pakistani security forces opened fire on protestors at *Babajee Kanda*, a pass in the mountains of Buner that connects Buner Valley with the plains of the province, and killed a dozen TNSM activists. After this the security situation deteriorated and the movement got more sympathy and strength and expanded its activities in different parts of Swat, Buner, Shangla and Dir districts and Bajaur Tribal Agency. This forced the provincial governor to announce a judicial system based on Islamic Shariah in Malakand but TNSM considered the move as a political ploy and continued with its rebellious activities.

In November, 1994 TNSM revolted against the State of Pakistan, its activists took positions in the mountains, occupied Kanjur Airport and other government buildings in Mingora and killed a member of the provincial legislature. The security forces launched an operation that resulted in a heavy battle that left several killed and plunged the valley in a new wave of religious fundamentalism.

After staying dormant for few years, TNSM re-emerged in 2001 when the US toppled the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Sufi Muhammad took more than 10,000 people with him across the border into Afghanistan to support Taliban against the foreign forces. The majority of Sufi Muhammad’s followers were common people with no training and experience in modern warfare; therefore most of them were either killed in the fighting or arrested by the forces of Northern Alliance.

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14. ([http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest\\_English\\_Journal/6.%20Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-%20Muhammadi,%20Navid%20iqbal.pdf](http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/6.%20Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-%20Muhammadi,%20Navid%20iqbal.pdf))

In rare example of “chivalry,” Sufi Muhammad, along with Fazlullah, deserted his “fighters” in the thick of the war in Afghanistan and crossed the Pak-Afghan border and handed themselves over to the local administration. Fazlullah was later released from prison and emerged as a militant commander and chief of Tehrik-e-Taliban in Swat Valley.

With the fall of Taliban in Afghanistan, once again the movement for Shariah was pushed to the background and its supporters were demoralized. However in 2006 Fazlullah revived the movement by adopting an innovative strategy, the launching of a pirate FM radio in his village at Mamdheri.

Mamdheri is a small village located at a distance of 5 kilometers from Mingora along the bank of the Swat river. The village people are farmers and grow rice, maize and wheat crops on the fertile soil. There are also orchards of juicy apples and peaches and in the 1970s people started to move to countries in the Middle East as menial workers. Some of them worked in the ships as seamen and later settled in different countries of Europe and the United States. Muslim Khan was one such person from the area who stayed and worked in the United States. He was later on appointed by Fazlullah as spokesman of TTP Swat. During his stay in the foreign land he observed western society and acquired skills in English language. He was also able to speak in Arabic, Urdu and Persian.

### **Fazlullah’s Strategy:**

In the beginning, Fazlullah focused on religious lessons and asked the people to purify their homes of “the evils of TVs, computers and dish antennas”. A majority of the people ignored his sermons and made fun of him, however women and elderly people who stayed most of the times at homes listened to his broadcasts and followed his advice in some areas where people burned their TV sets, dish antennas and computers. He wanted to isolate the population from the rest of the world and to a greater extent he was successful in this strategy.

Fazlullah was a master broadcaster with powerful communication skills. He used local jargons, proverbs and samples of poetry to make his sermons interesting. People appreciated him when he lambasted the government departments for corruption and delays in justice. In order to develop a loyal listenership, he mentioned names of the people who wrote or called him about their religious matters. Giving more space to the people’s voices and their problems multiplied his listenership. With the help of a local technician he upgraded his FM radio and started broadcasting in a radius of about 40 kilometers.

According to locals, in his younger age, Fazlullah was a vibrant guy. He participated in village sports, and played cards with friends. He passed his intermediate examination from Jehanzeb College in Mingora where he was a member of the secular and progressive Pashtun Students Federation (PSF). In the prime of his youth, Fazlullah realized that his father had sold his share of land that damaged his social standing in the society. His competing cousins had more money, land, and were enjoying more respect and recognition in society. This put Fazlullah in a bitter competition with his cousins and the society.

Under *Tarborwali*, or cousin rivalry, every Pashtun tries to protect his family identity and his share of land. In fact, an Individual’s social status depends on wealth and landholdings, therefore all the cousins are in a perpetual competition to work harder and amass as many assets as possible. Sometime differences over land and family issues resulted into serious enmities that may remain for decades.

Most of the time, Fazlullah was jobless but with financial assistance from one of his relatives, Siraj ud Din, he started operating a lift that carried tourists across the river, but this failed to generate enough money to remain in operation. Siraj ud Din switched over to the business of smuggling cars and Fazlullah joined Sufi Muhammad's TNSM as an activist. Siraj ud Din brought smuggled cars from Pakistan tribal areas, including Waziristan, where he established contacts with religious militant groups. He later on became spokesman of Fazlullah and is currently working as spokesman of Tehrik-e-Taliban in the Malakand region.

It was in the first half of 1990s when Fazlullah developed strong religious leanings and got actively involved with Sufi Muhammad. Sufi considered him one of his trusted followers and also married his daughter to him. Through his FM radio broadcasts, Fazlullah skillfully exploited injustices and excesses in society and got the support of the marginalized classes. He gave them a dream of a just society based on Islam, a catchy slogan that strengthened his support base in the rural areas of Swat.

Those who were fed up with the government system and economic disparity in the society became staunch followers of Fazlullah. Women in the surrounding villages created myths around his personality and exaggerated stories of his religious strength were soon in circulation. He would ride on a horse to remind his followers of Arab generals riding on horse as they hoisted the flag of Islam in non-Muslim lands. Jewelry symbolizes honor and financial autonomy for women in the Pashtun society. They don't give it even to their husbands for their needs, unless there is no other way for them, but Fazlullah had developed a trust among them by giving them the dream of paradise where there will be no worries and wants. And when he asked them to donate for the construction of his religious seminary the women donated hundreds grams gold to him. It was a huge success for him as now the women forced the male members of their families to support "Fazlullah Maulvi Sahib" as he was commonly known in those days. Ironically, women were the first target of Fazlullah's Jihad when he got power.

Within few months a huge complex was constructed and the area was turned into Taliban headquarters where apart from local militants Taliban fighters from Waziristan, Afghanistan and Punjab were also seen as a prime tourist destination was changed into a terrorist haven! This center was constructed on shared land of village people; those who refused to give land for the seminary were threatened and some of them were subsequently killed. An elder in Mamsheri told me part of the land on which Fazlullah constructed his seminary was owned by his father before he sold it to a cousin.

His campaign forced women to restrict their presence to the four walls of their houses and deprived 80,000 students from their right of education. An anti-polio campaign was termed "a conspiracy of the infidels" and a ban was imposed on music and dance. His militants started patrolling the roads to "enforce virtue and discourage evil". Police, community elders, female dancers and "US spies", were brutally killed and their dead bodies thrown in the main square of the city.

Two points are important here:

The socio-political leadership failed to rein in Fazlullah as the elections were close and they could not afford to lose their voters. They remained silent and some of the right wing political leaders provided financial help for Fazlullah. A Jirga of local elders was held in Swat Press Club in Mingora in 2008 but failed to reach a consensus on how to handle the impending crisis. The Jirga said it was the responsibility of the State to restore peace and put an end to Fazlullah's activities.

The State did not show political will to curb the increasing influence of Fazlullah and instead of challenging him, the executive, administrative and judicial departments of the State withdrew from Swat and left the field open to Fazlullah to thrive and play havoc with people's lives and properties. There is a common perception among people in Swat that the country's security establishment installed and supported Fazlullah in his mission under its strategic depth policy in the region.

After much delay, dallying, compromises such as the peace agreement with TTP Swat in May 2008, and bloodshed, the Pakistani military launched a large scale military offensive in Swat, Buner and Shangla valleys in July 2008. The consequent conflict and indiscriminate use of heavy artillery from both sides forced 2.3 million people to leave their homes to take refuge in camps of the internally displaced people (IDP) Peshawar, Mardan, and in the homes of their relatives and friends in the plains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the former North West Frontier Province.

## Post-Taliban Swat:

During the author's visit to Swat Valley in 2011, it was observed that the military practically controlled all the security, administrative, reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. It had yet to hand over the district to the civilian administration and the people were confronted with serious problems in getting compensation for their losses. The slow pace of reconstruction, lack of coordination among the government and non-governmental organizations and fragile security situation were adding to the prevailing uncertainty in the region.

Earlier the authorities claimed that Fazlullah was seriously injured in the military operation but in July 2010, Fazlullah released a 40 minute video showing him firing gun shots and addressing a group of suicide bombers. In his address, Fazlullah refused to concede defeat and said that leaving Swat was "tactical retreat", and part of their strategy.

"The government and the military are against us and you should target them," Fazlullah, who looked quite healthy in the video, told his followers. He ridiculed the government's claim that it had restored peace in Swat, saying, "The army committed worst terrorism by killing innocent people in Swat".<sup>15</sup>

The threat of Taliban's re-emergence still persists as TTP and its affiliates have continued to attack girls' schools, public gatherings and security personnel in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the adjoining tribal region.

Pakistan Authorities say that Fazlullah and his fighters are re-organizing in Kunar and Nuristan Provinces of Afghanistan and from there carry on cross-border attacks on security forces and the civilian population in Upper Dir and Chitral, two districts neighboring Swat. In May 2012, Siraj Ud Din, the spokesman of TTP Malakand, told me by telephone that they have moved elderly people of their families to the mountainous and far flung Kunar province of Afghanistan, but the fighters are on the Pakistan side of the border and from there carry out their operations.

In June 2012, militants affiliated with Fazlullah attacked a security check post in Barawal area of upper Dir, killed six security personnel and abducted five more. TTP's spokesman Siraj Ud Din accepted responsibility for the attack.

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15. (<http://tribune.com.pk/story/30284/new-video-shows-fazlullah-addressing-suicide-bombers/>)

In recent months Pakistan has complained several times of cross border attacks from Kunar and asked the NATO and Afghan forces to take actions against the Taliban who have taken refuge in Afghanistan. However, the US-led coalition has bluntly rebutted Pakistan's claim of 52 attacks carried out by Pakistani Taliban from Afghan soil and said in a statement "Whenever the Pakistani military has requested assistance, ISAF immediately dispatched the appropriate force to deal with the issue".<sup>16</sup>

The US authorities blame Pakistan for harboring the Haqqani Network in North Waziristan from where it carries out attacks on NATO and Afghan forces inside Afghanistan and asked Pakistan to eliminate the terrorist "safe havens" in the lawless tribal region. Pakistan denied these charges and complained that the international community has ignored the sacrifices of Pakistani people and security forces in the war against terror.

Officials in Kabul deny Fazlullah's presence on Afghan soil and say that Pakistan forces fire rockets into Afghan territory that kill and displace people. On the other hand Pakistani officials reject these claims.

While the US has announced a withdrawal of its forces in 2014, Taliban militants both in Pakistan and Afghanistan have intensified their attacks on civilians and security installations and Pakistan is in the grip of strong anti-American sentiment.

The Jihadist campaign that Fazlullah started in 2006 from the small village of Mamdheri in Swat has now expanded beyond Afghanistan - Pakistan border and has sowed seeds of distrust that are now resulting into deteriorated relations between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the United States.

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16. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/30/world/asia/pakistan-afghanistan-border-attacks-disputed.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/30/world/asia/pakistan-afghanistan-border-attacks-disputed.html?_r=1) )

# About the Author

Shaheen Buneri is a journalist and researcher with interest in the socio-political, cultural and economic impacts of the conflict in the local communities in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the adjoining tribal areas. As a reporter, he was a witness to the activities of TNSM and TTP in Malakand region.

The author personally interviewed TTP Swat commanders including Fazlullah, Muslim Khan and Sirajuddin and reported on Swat Valley before and after of the launch of military operation against Fazlullah and his militants. The author also stayed with the displaced people in their camps in Peshawar, Mardan and Nowshera when the conflict forced 2.5 million to flee from their homes in 2009.

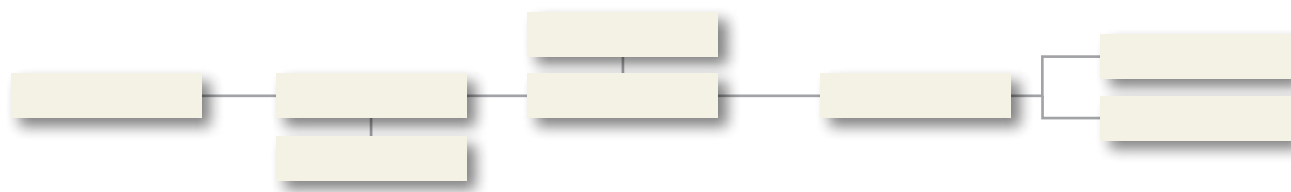
For his research work the author visited of Buner, Swat, Dir and Shangla and conducted interviews and group discussions with locals in 2007-2010.

For the history of the valley, the author consulted earlier research works on the region and conducted interviews with experts for references have been given in the paper.

# TRIBAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

Given the difficulties of conducting direct fieldwork in conflictive areas, the Tribal Analysis Center utilizes an indirect approach. Using multidisciplinary research, we seek to collect and analyze data obtained from a wide variety of sources, both current and historical. In the absence of new ethnographic fieldwork to update our base of knowledge, the Tribal Analysis Center compiles and summarizes existing research and documents on tribal societies, combining this material with contemporary press reports and articles. We assume that much can be gleaned from well-informed observers who are not anthropologists, ranging from journalists and travelers to government officials.



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