



## **Colloquium Series: Rethinking Partition Historiography: The Quest for Pakistan in Colonial India**

Speaker:

Venkat Dhulipala, Department of History, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

Date / Time:

August 9, 2012 - 3:45pm - 5:30pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Auditorium, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

Venkat Dhulipala's paper challenges the concepts of 'insufficient national imagination', 'secular nationalism' and 'accidental state formation' that have long dominated historical accounts of the origins of Pakistan. He examines how the idea of Pakistan was publicly articulated and debated in colonial India and how popular enthusiasm was generated for its achievement, especially in the crucial province of U.P, whose Muslims played a leading role in Pakistan's creation despite their awareness that UP itself would not be a part of Pakistan. He argues that far from being a vague idea that accidentally became a nation-state, Pakistan was popularly imagined as the new Medina, as the harbinger of the renewal and rise of Islam in the 20th century world, the new leader and protector of the global community of Muslims (ummah), and a worthy successor to the defunct Turkish Caliphate. In particular, He foregrounds the crucial role played by the Deobandi ulama in popularizing this imagination of the Pakistani nation. He further demonstrates how the ulama along with the Muslim League leadership forged a new political vocabulary, fusing ideas of Islamic nationhood and modern state to fashion the most decisive arguments in favor of Pakistan. My paper, therefore, departs from existing Partition narratives that have either emphasized the Muslim League leader M.A Jinnah's efforts to create Pakistan as a modern secular state, or argued that Pakistan was a vague but emotive religious symbol to which Indian Muslims gave overwhelming support without being aware of its meaning or implications. It further suggests that Pakistan's identity crisis centering on the relationship between Islam and the state can be traced to unresolved tensions at the core of its nationalist ideology, and not solely, as commonly argued, to Islamization policies instituted under General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s.

A Note on the Speaker:

Venkat Dhulipala is Assistant Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. He has an M.A in Political Science from University of Hyderabad, an M.A in South Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Ph.D in History from the

University of Minnesota. He was Research Fellow at the Institute for Historical Studies, University of Texas, Austin in 2010-2011. His book manuscript, 'Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India', is currently under review with a University press. His research articles have appeared in *Modern Asian Studies* (May 2010 issue) and *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (July/Sept 2011).