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**Hindu-Christian Conflict in India:
Globalization, Conversion, and the Coterminal Castes and Tribes**

CHAD M. BAUMAN

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While Hindu-Muslim violence in India has received a great deal of scholarly attention, Hindu-Christian violence has not. This article seeks to contribute to the analysis of Hindu-Christian violence, and to elucidate the curious alliance, in that violence, of largely upper-caste, anti-minority Hindu nationalists with lower-status groups, by analyzing both with reference to the varied processes of globalization. The article begins with a short review of the history of anti-Christian rhetoric in India, and then discusses and critiques a number of inadequately uncausal explanations of communal violence before arguing, with reference to the work of Mark Taylor, that only theories linking local and even individual social behaviors to larger, global processes like globalization can adequately honor the truly “webby” nature of the social world.

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In every case, the geography of anger is not a simple map of action and reaction, minoritization and resistance, nested hierarchies of space and site, neat sequences of cause and effect. Rather, these geographies are the spatial outcome of complex interactions between faraway events and proximate fears, between old histories and new provocations, between rewritten borders and unwritten orders.

-Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*

INTRODUCTION

Violence among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs has been a relatively regular feature of postcolonial Indian society.¹ Until the end of the 1990s, however, Indian Christians were largely unaffected by it, despite being, in some circles, resented as a “foreign” element and suspected of divided loyalties. The late 1990s, however, brought a sharp surge in acts of violence against Christians, and the year 1998 appears to mark a turning point. The United Christian Forum for Human Rights estimates that there were only thirty-two registered cases of communal violence against Christians between 1964 and 1996. In 1997 the rate of violence grew dramatically, to fifteen, and then in 1998 the number jumped drastically to ninety (Aaron 2002, 47). The first large-scale, anti-Christian riot also occurred in 1998, in the Dangs, Gujarat, a region dominated by tribal, or *adivasi*, peoples, many of whom had become Christian. No Christians were killed in these riots, which began on Christmas day. But over the next few days, rioters vandalized or destroyed dozens of Christian houses and places of worship.

Between 1998 and 2007 the number of attacks on Christians continued to climb, reaching present levels of well over two hundred annually. And then, on the day before Christmas in

2007, Hindu-Christian riots broke out in Kandhamal, Orissa. These riots lasted for a few days, subsided, and then broke out again in August 2008. In the two rounds of Kandhamal riots² there were, all told, more than fifty deaths, dozens of cases of sexual assault and rape, the destruction of thousands of homes, and the temporary or permanent displacement of over five thousand refugees.

Most but not all of the victims were Christian. Christians occasionally retaliated, and one Christian attack alone destroyed 120 Hindu homes. Additionally, a significant factor in the first round of violence was a December 24, 2007, altercation between Christians and the aging Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati, a popular but controversial local Hindu spiritual leader and anti-conversion activist, in which the swami claimed to have been injured. Many rioters framed their violence against Christians as a response to that altercation. Similarly, the second round of riots was touched off by the assassination of the swami and several others as they participated in a celebration of Krishna's birth (Krishna Janmashtami) at the swami's ashram. Naxalites claimed responsibility for the killing, describing it as a response to his "anti-minority" activities. But many of those who attacked Christians afterwards believed that the Naxalites either were Christian or were supported financially and logistically by Christians. Subsequent police investigations and court cases have yet to definitively settle the matter.

The sharp increase in Hindu-Christian violence leads logically to questions about why the violence should increase at this particular historical moment. Superficially, the obvious answer is politics. In the year 1998, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power at the center. The BJP and other institutions of the Hindu nationalism-oriented Sangh Parivar ("Family of the Sangh," that is, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS], or "National Volunteer Organization," about which, more below) have historically been more likely to condone anti-minority violence than

their Congress Party rivals (though it should be kept in mind that the anti-Sikh bloodletting after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 occurred under Congress rule). Yet the anti-Christian violence continued long after the BJP was swept out of power in 2004, and my own statistical analyses of anti-Christian violence (conducted with Tamara Leech) do not suggest a strong correlation between anti-Christian violence and BJP rule (Bauman and Leech 2012). Moreover, explanations based on BJP power do not account for why the BJP should have come to power in the first place, or why Christians should displace Muslims as the primary target of Sangh-affiliated anti-minority activities, as Sarkar claims, perhaps with some exaggeration, they did in 1998 (S. Sarkar 1999, 1691).

Some have speculated that the turning of the Sangh Parivar's attention towards India's Christians was a result of the public backlash it suffered after the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, which it had at least indirectly encouraged, and the deadly Hindu-Muslim riots that subsequently ensued. This backlash may have created a situation in which anti-Muslim activities offered diminishing electoral returns (Aaron 2002, 44). Others have pointed out that 1998 was the year that Sonia Gandhi, whose Italian and Christian origins are a perennial political issue, became president of the Congress Party. It is not surprising, therefore, that anti-Christian rhetoric might have gained political traction at about the same time. Still others have suggested that the increase of anti-Christian rhetoric and violence in the late 1990s was a response to well-publicized—and to many, offensively strategic—Western, Christian evangelical efforts, such as AD2000 and Beyond, or the Joshua Project, which set ambitious goals to reach the whole world with the Christian message by the end of the millennium (Zavos 2001, 75).

While there is no doubt some merit in these explanations, it is the argument of this article that the uptick in anti-Christian violence is linked substantially with the increasingly powerful

and tangible impact of globalization in India after the early 1990s, and with the way that Indian Christianity has come to stand, symbolically, as a proxy for it. Globalization, as I understand it and will use the term in this article, refers to the increasingly sophisticated and far-reaching interconnectedness of national and regional economies, peoples, and cultures through faster and more regular transportation and trade, and the speedier exchange of ideas and lifestyles.

The article is divided into three parts. In the first part, I provide a brief overview of the history of Hindu-Christian relations in India, and demonstrate how these relations were affected right from the beginning (and especially from the sixteenth century) not only by local dynamics but also by global flows of wealth, power, and knowledge.

In the second part, I examine a number of theories about communal violence that have been applied to Hindu-Christian violence, and suggest that all of them, in their most simplistic renderings, are plagued by two weaknesses: (1) that they focus too exclusively on one kind of causal factor—for example, the political, economic, or psychological—to the exclusion of others; and (2) that they fail to account for participation in anti-Christian violence by members of what I call the coterminous castes and tribes (CCTs, for short), that is, by members of the low-status castes and tribes who live in close proximity to targeted Christian communities, and who, because of their proximity (both geographic and hierarchical), compete with them socially, politically, and economically. Though most explanations of communalism tend to hold the largely middle- and upper-caste Sangh Parivar leaders wholly responsible for anti-minority violence, in both the Kandhamal and Dangs riots (but especially the former), the CCTs were active and conspicuous participants.

In the final section, then, I suggest, following Mark C. Taylor, that the adequate analysis of any religious phenomenon requires an interactive, “nodal” approach that respects the “webby”

interconnectedness of religion and broader cultural, social, and even biological and technological realities. Such phenomena cannot be analyzed discretely, Taylor (2009) contends. Rather, all phenomena should be conceived of as a network of multiple elements, or, rather, as one network in a “network of networks” (113). Taylor writes: “It is necessary to explore the relations between and among different religious traditions as well as the interplay of religious symbolic networks with other natural, socio-economic, and technological factors.... To unravel these complex interconnections, it is necessary to concentrate on specific *nodal* notions” (114). And with this in mind, I turn, then, to a short history of Hindu-Christian relations. I do this for two reasons: (1) because history itself is its own kind of “network,” one which interacts with and informs contemporary social behavior; and (2) because even a cursory glance at the history of Hindu-Christian relations in India demonstrates that Hindu-Christian relations were “webby” right from the start, that is, they were affected in significant (and largely negative) ways by a complex *mélange* of local and translocal factors.

PART ONE: A SHORT HISTORY OF HINDU-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

India’s first substantial community of Christians, the Malayalam-speaking St. Thomas or “Syrian” Christians, had achieved a relatively high status within South Indian society already by the sixth century (Bayly 1989, 8).³ And in the medieval period, these Syrian Christians rose to even greater prominence as a respected, high-ranking warrior and trading community within the petty kingdoms of the Malabar coast, competing for, and receiving, “honors” and patronage in exchange for loyalty and service (35, 247–48, 273–74, 460).

Their religious apparatus, which focused on the shrines of powerful, miracle-working saints (many of them from Syria), was one among many such cults—similar to, and intertwined

with, Hindu and Muslim cults. And the “honors” the Christian community received would have involved being given the privilege of making certain sacred offerings during Hindu ceremonies and festivals. For these reasons, the Syrians were in fact during this period perceived to be a ritually pure community, and neither they nor their shrines were considered polluting to upper-caste Hindus (Bayly 1989, 27, 35, 69–70, 275).

When the Portuguese arrived in 1498, they quickly established an alliance with the Syrian Christians, though relations between the two communities would later become complicated, particularly after 1560 when the Inquisition, which considered Syrian Christianity inadequately orthodox, was established in Goa. Over the next centuries, European Catholics repeatedly attempted to detach the Syrians from their beloved Eastern patriarchs and bring them under the ecclesiastical authority of the *Padroado Real*, to which a substantial number of Syrian Christians agreed at the Synod of Diamper in 1599 (Frykenberg 2008, 131–36; Pearson [1987] 2006, 119). Apart from providing a powerful and enduring symbol of Christian imperialism and excess (i.e., the Inquisition), the Portuguese also initiated a process whereby the cult of Syrian Christianity was progressively Europeanized and disentangled from those of other South Indian religions. Additionally, through the work of Francis Xavier and other missionaries, they oversaw the first mass infusion of lower-caste Hindus into the Christian fold.

These trends accelerated after 1795, when the Hindu states of Malabar (Travancore and Cochin) became tributary states of the British East India Company (BEIC), which promptly demilitarized its new clients, putting warrior communities like the Syrian Christians, who were already reeling from disruptions in their land and sea trade, out of work. Less necessary, wealthy, and powerful within this altered economic and political landscape, the Syrians began to lose the

patronage of local rulers, and the status and honors that patronage had in the earlier era secured (Bayly 1989, 281–84, 460; Subramanian 2009, 73).

Soon thereafter, evangelical BEIC residents began to take an active interest in Syrian Christianity. Considering it unacceptably syncretistic, they set about reforming it, with the help of British missionaries, in the direction of “orthodox” Protestant Christianity. They also sought to “protect” Syrian Christians from what they assumed was their *forced* participation in temple ceremonies. What the British did not realize, of course, was that it was the Syrians’ “syncretistic” practices and participation in these ceremonies that had previously safeguarded their integration at a high level within the local hierarchy of purity and pollution (Bayly 1989, 252, 282–85, 288, 296–98; Subramanian 2009, 74). Then, when missionaries began to assert publicly that newly converted, low-caste Christians were to be considered of the same status as Syrian Christians, the effect was to further erode the latter’s social standing. By midway through the nineteenth century, upper-caste Hindus in Cochin and Travancore were treating Syrian Christians like a ritually polluting caste; by the 1880s they were routinely denied honors in local Hindu festivals, and Hindu-Christian rioting as a result of honors contestations became a regular feature of town centers with large Syrian and upper-caste Hindu populations (Bayly 1989, 292–93, 300–302, 313; Subramanian 2009, 75).

Elsewhere in the nineteenth century, the work of European missionaries, whose numbers surged after pro-missionary changes to the Company’s charter in 1813, provoked controversy and resistance, not only for their evangelical activities but also for their role in colonial education and their successful advocacy of social reforms (e.g., the banning of *sati* in 1829) and policy changes that favored lower castes, peasants, and Christians. These reforms undermined traditional social arrangements and the authority of the landholding classes, while demonstrating

the widening reach and influence of missionaries in British India (Copland 2006). While missionaries were occasionally targeted in the anti-Christian harassment and violence that ensued, native Christians bore the brunt of it, and often found themselves driven out of their homes, beaten up, or even killed, usually by mobs supported by their landlords (Ali 1965).

Already by mid-century, then, convert Christians in India, like Syrian Christians, were beginning to be perceived as a religious community distinct from other Indian religious communities, and one with suspect loyalties to British rule. The Great Rebellion of 1857 substantiates this latter claim. In the Rebellion, which had been provoked primarily by Indian concerns about *British* intrusions into their social and religious lives, *native* Christians were regularly the focus of rebel attacks (Wagner 2010). The perception of Indian Christian “difference” and disloyalty only strengthened in the second half of the century, as did the reactionary conservatism of India’s increasingly apprehensive elites, who felt threatened by what they considered the mounting pervasiveness and power of evangelical Christianity. Anti-missionary rhetoric became the hallmark of the resulting, late nineteenth-century Hindu revivalism, while scattered attacks on missionaries and native Christians continued (T. Sarkar 2001).

British colonial strategy and policy also contributed to the greater differentiation of religious communities in India. Throughout the nineteenth century, British officials had attempted to manage affairs on the ground in India in part by managing the relationship of India’s religions. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, colonial authorities carefully balanced the proportion of “Hindus” and “Muslims” in city police forces, and relied upon those they considered India’s “natural leaders” (frequently either religious or caste officials) to mediate their rule to the masses (Freitag 1989, 16, 19, 57–78). Towards the end of

the century, the British also began conducting decennial censuses, and at the beginning of the twentieth century they began granting separate electorates for India's religious minorities. The censuses force-fit the many complicated (and often plural and syncretic) religious identities of India's people onto the Procrustean frame of "world" religions, while separate electorates apportioned political representation based on religious demographics, further politicizing religious identity. Individually, the colonial policies described in this paragraph "frequently buttressed the supposedly primordial corporate identity and structures of leadership of castes and religious sects ... thereby rendering rigid what had hitherto been more negotiable entities" (Kidambi 2007, 159). In combination, their effects were even more dramatic.

Even in the colony's tributary states, where representational politics were generally slower to emerge, colonial-era tendencies toward enumeration had profound effects. The princely state of Travancore, for example, began conducting its own censuses in this same era. The growth of the Christian community, evidence for which was provided by the censuses, caused concern among the rulers of the state and contributed to the creation of policies—such as the granting of rights and benefits only to *non*-Christian lower-caste communities—which both bolstered the state's Hindu character and sought to defend and support Hindus and "Hindu" social patterns and authority from challenges mounted by the un-Hindu Other. This process signaled a shift that would be replicated elsewhere in India "away from a commitment to overlapping sovereignties that allows for mutuality between Hindu kingship and a variety of other religious affiliations to a defensive posture on Hinduism that requires the incorporation of non-Hindus into an exclusive sovereignty" (Subramanian 2009, 93).

Beginning towards the end of the nineteenth century, rapid urbanization in India helped spur the development of associational life, while the progressive British abandonment of

interventions in the public arena after the Rebellion made that space a politicized one (Sanjay Joshi 2001, 103–4). In this hotly contested public arena, urban groups sought to mobilize their local constituencies, and often did so by defining themselves over and against other competing groups. Constituencies thus mobilized could (and, increasingly after the turn of the century, *did*) join with others elsewhere in pursuit of larger, regional or even national projects. In moving back and forth between the small-scale, relational identities at the local level and broader, more ideologically oriented identities invoked by common pursuit of regional or national goals, local religious groups came to have a greater sense of being part of a larger religious community (“Hindu” or “Muslim,” for example). Groups turned against a local “Other” were thus increasingly turned against more regionally or nationally defined “Others” (Freitag 1989, 53–56, 80, 94–96, 125, 146, 284).

Another important and related feature of the developing North Indian urban spaces of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the growing importance of the middle class. As Sanjay Joshi has shown with reference to Lucknow, the urban middle classes that rose to public prominence under colonial rule produced a “fractured modernity” informed by liberal tendencies but limited by tradition and their own self-interest, and therefore espousing often contradictory positions on social, cultural, religious, and political matters. For example, concerns about preserving their privilege in the face of lower-caste challenges prevented them from enthusiastically supporting efforts to undermine caste. (The middle class emerged primarily from middle- and upper-caste communities.) Challenges from religious minorities often produced similarly conservative reactions. The middle class in Lucknow not only was capable of producing sharp divisions between “Hindu” and “Muslim,” but also contributed to the homogenization of “Hindu” belief and practice in order to expand its political influence to a

progressively broader cross-section of society (Inden 1990; Sanjay Joshi 2001, 2–12, 162; van der Veer 1999). Similar processes were underway elsewhere in urban India (on Bombay, for example, see Kidambi 2007, 12–13, 161–66).

Perhaps the most important association to emerge at this time was the Arya Samaj. Founded in Bombay in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83), the Arya Samaj was one of the earliest Hindu associations to deal openly and directly (not just rhetorically) with the challenge of Christian proselytizing. Fueled by concerns over what appeared, in the decennial censuses, to be declining Hindu numbers and a massive rise in conversions to Islam and Christianity, the Samaj developed campaigns of mass “purification” (*shuddhi*) in order both to reconvert converts to Christianity and Islam, and to “purify” members of the traditionally “impure” lower castes, marking them as integral members of the Hindu community in order to decrease the possibility that they would convert to minority religions to seek social advance (Kidambi 2007, 174–76; Vandavelde 2011, 34–39).

Nevertheless, Christianity continued to gain converts in significant numbers, due in part at least to a series of devastating famines throughout India during the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Bauman 2008a, 76–79; Zavos 2001, 82). As a result of these political and demographic changes, many advocates of Hinduism began to assert that the growth of Christianity represented a serious threat to the Hindu faith, as in U. N. Mukherji’s 1909 series of articles appearing in *The Bengalee*, “Hindus—A Dying Race.” Christian conversions and antagonistic colonial policies also spurred the development of regional Hindu Sabhas (“Societies”), beginning in 1907, and then the All-India Hindu Sabha (or “Mahasabha”) in 1915. Though the Mahasabhites remained largely focused on Muslims throughout the 1920s, many continued to harbor misgivings about missionaries and the growth of Christianity, which they

lumped together with Islam as a “foreign” faith promoting foreign loyalties. Similar concerns, as well as apprehensions about a potential loss of unity in the struggle for independence, led prominent Indian intellectuals to seek some fundamental, stable essence of Indian identity that could be used to galvanize Indians and motivate them to fight for their liberation. V. D. Savarkar’s 1923 tract, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, posited an essential Indian identity based on *Hindutva*, or Hindu-ness. When Savarkar became president of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, his more radical views became the norm within that body.

Inspired by Savarkar’s views, the Maharashtrian Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889–1940) founded the RSS in 1925. Hedgewar’s objective was to propagate the ideology of *Hindutva* while infusing “new physical strength into the majority community” (Jaffrelot 2007, 16). The RSS grew dramatically in the next decades, and spawned several other important organizations, including, eventually, what became the BJP. Of the many organizations associated with the Sangh Parivar, the Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, or ABVKA (“All-India Forest-Dweller’s Welfare Center,” founded in 1952) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or VHP (“World Hindu Council,” founded in 1964) are particularly pertinent to the history of Hindu-Christian conflict because they were created for the precise purpose of neutralizing the influence and reversing the successes of Christian missionaries (S. Sarkar 1999, 1697; Zavos 2001, 84). To do so, both have at times revived the Arya Samaj’s practice of *shuddhi*, though under names like *paravartan* (“return,” “turning back”) or *ghar vapasi* (“homecoming”).

Even Gandhi, whose more irenic conception of Indian nationhood contrasted significantly with that of Savarkar and Golwalkar, became, in the 1930s and ‘40s, increasingly opposed to the work of Christian missionaries, whose success among lower-caste Hindus threatened to dilute the Hindu voice and vote (Frykenberg 2003, 7–8; Harper 2000, 292–345).

Though he spoke approvingly of Christ and of Christian scriptures, Gandhi publicly and repeatedly accused Indian converts of being denationalized, and decried Christian missionaries' targeting of lower-caste Hindus, whom he considered, somewhat controversially, inadequately intelligent to make their own religious decisions (Kim 2003, 33). Gandhi mainstreamed criticism of Christian evangelical efforts, and also called the appropriateness of conversion *itself* into question. Gandhi's views on the topic reflect an ambivalence about Christianity in India that was (and remains) typical of many even moderate Hindus.

At Independence in 1947, British India was divided into predominantly Muslim Pakistan and predominately Hindu India, setting off a massive migration (of Pakistani Hindus and Sikhs to India, and Indian Muslims to Pakistan), and provoking interreligious riots that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths. Aside from this fierce internecine violence, the Partition had a more general deleterious effect on interreligious interactions in India. As Zamindar argues in *The Long Partition*, in order to address the multitude of questions about citizenship, passports, and evacuee property that Partition generated, India had to develop a range of bureaucratic guidelines, distinctions, and definitions, all of which served to determine (and concretize) the nation and its limits. Such determinations very often revolved around religion, contributing to processes begun in the late nineteenth century that increasingly defined the Indian nation as a Hindu one, and rendered fluid and blurry religious definitions static and permanent through the force of a bureaucratic machinery (Zamindar 2007, 229, 238). The Partition was therefore "long" not only because it remains powerful as a rhetorical device—the Partition as perpetual grievance against Muslims, for example, or as a warning of what could happen if the Christian community grew large enough to demand a separate homeland—but also because it continues to shape how Indians think about religion, and about the religious other.

Despite the prominence, in public discourse, of the perceived Muslim threat to the integrity of India during and after Partition, traditionalist Hindu organizations continued to voice concern about Christian mission work among lower-caste Hindus and tribal peoples during the Constituent Assembly debates of 1946–50, in the course of which a constitutional ban on conversion was unsuccessfully proposed. And conversion remained a live issue in the next decades, during which a number of state-sponsored reports on Christian mission work appeared, the most famous of which was the *Christian Missionary Activities Inquiry Committee Report* (1956), which was sponsored by the Madhya Pradesh state government. The *Report* confirmed the fears of opponents of Christianity by alleging that the Christian population was growing by leaps and bounds, that the Hindu population was declining rapidly, and that Christian missionaries sought not only converts but also the establishment of an independent Christian state along the lines of Pakistan. The *Report* recommended that foreign missionaries focused on evangelism be sent home and laws be drafted that would prohibit conversion by “force,” “fraud,” “inducement,” and “allurement.” This latter recommendation inspired a series of anti-conversion laws in Orissa (1967), Madhya Pradesh (1968), Arunachal Pradesh (1978), and elsewhere (Bauman 2008b, 192).⁴ Similar laws were proposed at the national level at least three times (in 1954, 1960, and 1978), but failed each time to gain acceptance (Mustafa and Sharma 2003, 109–11).

Though the putative Muslim menace remained the primary concern of most Hindu nationalists in the twentieth century, it is clear that apprehensions about Christianity never faded completely from view. And then, for reasons discussed in the introduction, the late 1990s brought increased attention to India’s Christians and the work of Christian missionaries, such that by the end of the century, VHP General Secretary Giriraj Kishore could declare that

Christians constituted “a greater threat [to India] than the collective threat from separatist Muslim elements” (Aron 2002, 31).

PART TWO: THEORIES OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

The increase in Hindu-Christian violence is recent enough that few scholars have so far attempted to explain it. For this reason, I will briefly discuss a variety of prevalent theories about communal violence in general. Not all communal violence is the same, of course, but each of the three theories of Hindu-Muslim violence I discuss—focusing, respectively, on the psychological, the political, and the economic—have also been used to explain Hindu-Christian violence.

The first prevalent theory of communal violence suggests that interreligious riots are merely a species of riots more generally, towards which humans seem to have a propensity, particularly when strong inter-group grievances, rumors, or perceived provocations remove the stigma that might ordinarily attach to violence (Horowitz 2001, 4), and/or when the absence of effective and unbiased law and order removes the fear of judicial retribution. Still others have argued that humans simply lose their ordinary individuality and moral qualms in the riot context. For example, Sudhir Kakar has suggested that the riot “crowd’s assault on the sense of individuality, its invitation to transcend one’s individual boundaries and its offer of a freedom from personal doubts and anxieties is well nigh irresistible” (Kakar 1990, 143). In fact, Kakar goes even further, suggesting that the division of humans into exclusive groups alone, that is, group identity itself, is “*inherently* a carrier of aggression” (Kakar 1996, 189).

Such theories, however, as Paul Brass has indicated, place “the ultimate responsibility for communal violence in the irrational tendencies of the human psyche, in other words precisely nowhere” (Brass 2003, 30). They also imply, problematically, that riots are aberrant, a “rupture” (Pandey 2006, 14), that their existence does not in any way reflect social or cultural peculiarities specific to the individuals and groups of people who participate in them. For this reason and others, such theories are not particularly useful in interpreting Hindu-Christian violence.

The second prominent theory emphasizes the political roots of communal riots. According to Brass, for example, the riots take place “most notably in the case of competitive political systems in a context of intense political mobilization or electoral competition in which riots are precipitated as a device to consolidate the support of ethnic, religious, or other culturally marked groups” (Brass 2003, 15, 34–35). For Brass, therefore, the question is not so much “What provoked the violence?” as “Who does it serve?” And the fact that anti-minority violence serves the interests of the BJP and its local/regional affiliates helps explain its persistence (Engineer 1984, 34).

The third prevalent theory focuses on economic competition. Engineer suggests, for example, that Hindu-Muslim riots often occur in mid-sized towns with thriving small-scale artisanal industries in which Muslims have achieved “a relative degree of prosperity” (Engineer 1984, 36). In such cases, what appears to be interreligious violence very often masks an underlying economic conflict that plays out along religious lines (36).

Economic competition has frequently been used to explain Hindu-Christian violence as well. In an analysis of the anti-Christian violence in Gujarat, Lancy Lobo notes that while Gujarat is one of the most industrially developed states in India, its development is unevenly distributed, and the advance of certain areas of the state depends upon the exploitation of the

tribals in a “tribal belt” that runs along the hilly regions of the eastern part of the state (Lobo 2002, 18). This arrangement is disturbed by Christian missionaries (foreign and indigenous, but increasingly the latter) who initiate uplift programs among the *adivasis*, provide them with alternative sources of information and social power, and thereby diminish the extent to which traders, industrialists, and landlords can exploit them. Fearing the loss of cheap labor and easy access to affordable raw materials, these groups attempt to undermine the authority of missionaries by whipping up anti-Christian sentiment, which contributes to the likelihood of violence (19). I am sympathetic to Lobo’s views, and in fact he places these comments on the economic elements of communal violence within a broader discussion of globalization, as I intend to do. But one must be careful, as Pandey has suggested, to avoid segregating the “economic dimension,” thereby reducing “the lives of men and women to calculations of financial profit and loss” (Pandey 2006, 32).

In my view, all of the theories so far discussed share two weaknesses. The first is that *in isolation* none of them provide a *sufficient* explanation for riot violence. The psychological theories, as has been noted, reduce all people to riot-prone savages, but fail to explain why *certain* people are more inclined to riot, or why riots tend to occur at *certain* places, and between certain people, more frequently. If we are all prone to riot violence, why are riots relatively uncommon in some other diverse societies? Answering such questions would require an investigation of cultural, economic, political, and social factors. Similarly, political theories, if advanced to the exclusion of others, fail also to explain why all competitive politics do not lead to riots. Why, for example, in the United States (or at least the modern United States) do the heated differences between the Democratic Party and the Tea Party not lead to large-scale street scuffles? Answering questions like these requires reference to cultural differences, to issues of

law and order, perhaps to economic factors, etc. Similarly, if economic competition is truly to blame for communal violence, then why is it that not all competitive groups engage in riot violence with one another? Again, broader investigation is required to answer the questions, “Why here?” and “Why now?”

It bears mentioning that the theorists I have quoted above (Brass, Engineer, Kakar, Lobo) actually *do* generally broaden the scope of their investigation to include multiple factors. Brass’s emphasis on the political, for example, involves an analysis of cultural and economic factors. And my own broader approach, as I have indicated, is inspired by Lobo’s attempt to look at the multiple and interconnected effects of globalization. The sole point I am trying to make here is merely that no causal factor should be advanced in isolation from others.

The second weakness of the dominant theories of communal violence is that they fail to account for the participation of what I am calling the CCTs in communal violence. The CCTs are castes and tribes that live in close proximity to, and in social, economic, and political competition with, groups targeted by communal violence. Generally speaking, the CCTs share an equal (and most often equally low) status with the targeted groups. Sometimes they are members of the very same caste or tribe, as in cases where there is violence *within* a caste or tribe but between adherents of different religions. Most theories of communal violence focus on the middle- and upper-caste Hindus who dominate the leadership of the Sangh Parivar, particularly at the regional and national levels. For example, Engineer argues, “The communal phenomenon is political in genesis. Communal tension arises as a result of the skilful manipulation of the religious sentiments and cultural ethos of a people *by its elite* which aims to realize its political, economic and cultural aspirations by identifying these aspirations as those of the entire community” (Engineer 1984, 34, emphasis added). There is no doubt that in communal violence

the participation of elite members of Sangh Parivar groups is often quite prominent (though that participation is generally more rhetorical than actual). And yet very often the CCTs participate along with Sangh affiliates in violence against local minorities, even though superficially it would seem that the members of CCTs should be skeptical of what most consider the Sangh's upper-caste bias. It is not that the theories described above *cannot* account for the participation of CCTs. But generally speaking, those that advance them have not attempted to do so.

Surely instances of communal violence in India do often include the attempt, by elite elements, to manipulate and co-opt members of the lower castes and tribes. But we do members of such communities a disservice by focusing too exclusively on upper-caste provocateurs. For if we insist that the CCTs are entirely guileless, then we implicitly strip them of agency and indirectly assert that they are simpletons and dupes who are easily and frequently hoodwinked into acting against their interests. A far simpler explanation, to invoke the *lex parsimoniae*, is that members of the CCTs participate in communal violence because *it serves their interests as well*. Their interests may be more particular and local than the general, well-known, and widely articulated interests of the Sangh Parivar. But we should make some attempt, it seems to me, to explain why the CCTs involve themselves in violence against their neighbors.

PART THREE: GLOBALIZATION AND HINDU-CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE

In what follows, therefore, I attempt to address both of these problems by discussing globalization and its myriad effects on religious interactions in India. In short, I hope to show how communal violence (and violence against Christians in particular) results from the interplay of local exigencies and global flows of wealth, power, and money. Such a move is encouraged, even required, by Arjun Appadurai's assertion in the epigraph that introduces this article, as well

as by Taylor's assertion that all knowledge is "webby" (Taylor 2009, 117), requiring an emphasis on "nodes" of intersection. In many ways, as my use of the term "intersection" should make clear, Taylor's analysis was prefigured by feminist sociological analysis focusing on the "intersectionality" of oppression, that is, on how marginalized figures are often negatively and simultaneously impacted by their ethnicity, race, sexuality, class, etc. (Crenshaw 1991).

An emphasis on nodality would mean that one would not attempt to explain interreligious riots as a function of politics, economics, or psychology alone. In Taylor's view, these three "networks" are merely aspects of the larger network of society, which is networked and interacts nodally with cultural networks (religion, philosophy, art, etc.), natural networks (chemistry, biology, physics, etc.) and technological networks (bioinformatics, media/communications, information). If this is so, then "since all these networks are codependent and coemergent, every form of reductive analysis is simply wrong" (Taylor 2009, 114).

The alternative, however, is both *awe*-inspiring and at the same time *awful*. (Somehow here a reference to Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* seems apposite.) If all phenomena are but networks in a network of networks, then the dispiriting reality is that no analysis could ever be complete. And if that is true, then one is faced with only two options: further reductive analysis or an increasingly complex yet never complete (or even complete-able) investigation. In choosing to emphasize the effects of globalization I choose a kind of reduction, for "globalization" is surely a simplification, a heuristic device. But it is one that inherently implies within it the kind of nodal, interconnected analysis Taylor enjoys. And so, while what follows is surely not complete, it does recognize the way that religion intersects with other cultural networks, as well as with social networks like economics, politics, and (to a lesser extent)

psychology. And that, it seems to me, is about as “webby” as one can get without becoming, like ill-fated flies, hopelessly entangled.

Globalization and Its Effects

While European expansionism (e.g., British colonialism in India) represents an important early form of globalization, the process accelerated significantly midway through the twentieth century, and a period of high- or hyper-globalization was ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reintegration of Soviet and East Asian economies onto the global scene, the privatization of nationalized industries in postcolonial societies like India, and the Internet and communications revolutions. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991; Indian decentralization began the same year; and the Internet revolution began as a public phenomenon at about the same time, becoming a staple of life in developed societies by the end of the decade. (Cell phone usage also increased dramatically in India from the late 1990s, when there were almost none, to today when it seems even many lower-class families have several mobile phones.) The 1990s, therefore, mark an important new era in the history of globalization, and this corresponds, in India, with the rise in anti-Christian violence. The connection is not limited to India. As Appadurai suggests: “... throughout the developing world, the death or implosion of powerful national economies ... has been accompanied by the rise of various new fundamentalisms, majoritarianisms, and indigenisms, frequently with a marked ethnocidal edge” (Appadurai 2006, 23; see also Beyer 1994; Friedman 1994). To consider why this might be so, we must examine the economic, political, and cultural effects of globalization in India.

Economic Effects

India's economy began to falter in the late 1980s, and by 1991 Rajiv Gandhi was forced, in exchange for loans from the International Monetary Fund, to agree to the New Economic Policy (NEP), which prescribed decreased spending on social programs, the elimination of certain state subsidies, liberalized trade, the privatization of failing public enterprises, and the free entry of foreign capital (Lobo 2002, 122). As a result of the NEP, India's financial gates were opened wide to the forces of globalization. Foreign investment increased exponentially, from 158 million dollars in 1991–92 to over six *billion* dollars in 1996–97 (124). According to Lobo, this influx of capital enriched the old “industrial, business, political, military, bureaucratic and religious elite in India, but it ... impoverished the masses” (126). Privatization also increased economic anxiety for many by removing a major source of guaranteed employment in nationalized industries (112).

Globalization was resented by those who did not benefit from it, but also by many of those who did, because with globalization came greater foreign involvement and foreign control in India's economy. This involvement was perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of India and pricked the national pride of India's traditional elites. Additionally, economic globalization introduced new routes to wealth (e.g., education, entrepreneurship, etc.) based on merit and skill rather than ascriptive status, thus undermining, in another way, the traditional privilege of India's old, largely upper-caste elite (Pathak 1987, 214). But by offering new avenues to wealth and power, globalization also threatened traditional status arrangements *within* and *among* castes and communities at all levels in the caste hierarchy. Education was one of those new avenues, and to the extent that Christians have had somewhat greater access to education in India, they have often been able, in terms of wealth and social status, to leapfrog over both upper-caste elites and the CCTs with whom they compete at the local level. Christian educational efforts are therefore

seen not only as a kind of allurement (particularly when they are offered only to Christians, or to Christians at a reduced price), but also as a destabilizing social force. Moreover, education and literacy reduce the extent to which the lower castes and tribes can be exploited by traditional elites, as discussed above (Aaron 2009, 111; Mustafa and Sharma 2003, 151; Viswanathan 2007, 346, 348). In fact, in some cases, better education has even turned Christians into exploiters in the eyes of their neighbors (more on that below).

It would seem natural that the forces of globalization would pit lower castes and tribes against the traditional upper-caste elite. And that is in fact how the story of globalization and communalism is often told—anti-minority violence is perpetrated by upper-caste Hindu out-of-towners putting the “uppity,” formerly (or currently) lower-caste Muslims or Christians in their place. But in fact in both the Kandhamal and Dangs riots, local CCTs also participated in the anti-Christian violence.

If we were to search for economic motives for their participation, we would need look no farther than the fact that the CCTs are also threatened by the new market realities because they perceive their Christian neighbors to be poised to more effectively take advantage of them. Sushil Aaron writes, “While an empirical confirmation of the beneficial effects of switching allegiance to Christianity among recently converted communities is yet to be demonstrated on a national plane, Christian communities do better on human development indices” such as education, literacy, neonatal mortality, antenatal care, etc. (Aaron 2002, 23). Much of the relative success of Christian communities can be attributed to the current and historical activities of foreign and indigenous missionaries, particularly in establishing educational and medical institutions (Aaron 2002, 23; Pathak 1987, 220). It is not surprising, therefore, that schools are often targeted in anti-Christian riots, even schools where the majority of students are non-

Christian, as was the case in Dangs, where Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel railed against the “foreign education of Christians” (Gonsalves 1999, 13).

Around India, Christian communities have also, frequently with missionary help, formed cooperatives and guilds that have helped them outcompete their neighbors in the marketplace or find effective ways to counter exploitation (Aaron 2007, 9, 32; 2009, 110). And even if Christian educational facilities today rarely explicitly deny access to non-Christians, the perception is rather widespread that Christians generally have easier or cheaper access to them, and, following from this, that this access has led, over the years, to the greater affluence of many Christian communities in comparison with their non-Christian neighbors. Surely there is some truth to this perception. Not surprisingly, then, jealousy about the higher financial status of Christian communities, or grievances arising from a sense of being exploited by them, often contribute to the condoning of or actual participation in anti-Christian violence by the CCTs.

Certainly they did in Kandhamal. Most of the Christians targeted in the Orissa riots were *dalit* Panas, and some members of the Kandha *adivasi* community participated (actually and rhetorically) in the riots and their justification. In victims’ affidavits, for example, Kandha names appear alongside those of caste Hindus on the lists of those accused (and in some cases convicted) of participating in the violence. The largely Christianized Panas and largely un-Christianized Kandhas shared in common a language (Kui), history, and low social position, though the two communities had developed in opposition to one another over time, with the *adivasi* Kandhas historically considering themselves superior to the *dalit* Panas (Pfeffer 2010). Exacerbating these longstanding tensions was the fact that in the years leading up to the riots, the Pana Christians had become more educated and more noticeably wealthy, and many Kandhas

believed the Pana Christians were using their education to exploit the Kandhas and expropriate their lands.

In the Dangs, as well, similar tensions existed between Christianized *adivasis* and their non-Christian *adivasi* neighbors due to the fact that Christianized *adivasis* seemed through the formation of cooperatives and through better access to the outside world (via itinerant Christian workers) to have better resisted exploitation by non-*adivasi* merchants, traders, and landlords at work in the region. In the process, they also undermined the authority of local village elites (Satyakam Joshi 1999, 2675). That said, the tensions created by Christian interventions in the Dangs may have been less significant than those in Kandhamal due to the fact that non-Christian *adivasis* had also benefitted from the formation of cooperatives.

In addition to specific, local jealousies there also appears, in many parts of India, to be a generalized sense of economic malaise due to shifting economic realities and growing inequality between India's elites and its impoverished communities. In this context, Christians are often perceived not only as purveyors of economic globalization, but also as its primary beneficiaries. And so many members of the CCTs are united with many traditional upper-caste elites in their resentment of Christians, particularly those who appear to be financially advanced in comparison with their neighbors.⁵

Political Effects

A sense of anxiety about the political disintegration of the nation seems to be a relatively common element of the postcolonial condition, and many of the threats that harried India at Independence—the unsettled status of Kashmir, the possible aggression of Pakistan or China, quasi-Christian insurgencies in the northeast—remain very real problems today. Since then, of

course, other threats, such as a serious Maoist/Naxalite insurgency, have been added. There remains, therefore, widespread and (because of these threats) somewhat justified anxiety about the survival and integrity of the Indian nation. A nationalistic response is not particularly surprising in this context. Globalization merely exacerbates the nationalistic reaction by adding yet another perceived threat to national sovereignty. Many in India and elsewhere, therefore, contend that globalization is the “latest phase in the history of imperialism” (Ahmad 2007, 94, see also 99).

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the BJP actually *advocates* for economic liberalization. The nationalist response to globalization in India is indeed complex. While many nationalists (though more so among those associated with the BJP than with the RSS or VHP) seek the potential benefits of economic globalization, they continue to resent the loss of sovereignty that taking advantage of those benefits requires, as well as the foreign cultural and political influence that comes inevitably along with them.

If the nation is under threat, according to nationalist thinking, then a strong, unified response is required. And unity requires a clearly defined central identity. “Foreign” or minority influences must be eschewed, and those suspected of purveying them (foreigners, minorities, the westernized elite, missionaries, etc.) must be kept at bay for fear that they might undermine national unity. As indicated above, many nationalists worry, even, that the Hindu majority could become a minority through the immigration of non-Hindus, higher than average reproduction rates of minority communities, and/or (as is the case with Christianity in India) through conversion. The fear that the majority might become a minority is particularly acute among *upper-caste* Hindu nationalists because they do, in fact, constitute quite a tiny minority (Schermerhorn 1978, 16–19). It is only in conjunction with the far more sizeable community of

middling castes, *dalits*, and *adivasis* that upper-caste nationalists can pretend to represent a majority.

Christianity represents a political threat to the Hindu nationalist agenda by picking away, through *dalit* and *adivasi* conversions, at the edges of this already unwieldy and tenuous coalition. The assumption, of course, is that Christians have divided (and at least somewhat foreign) loyalties. In this view, conversions to Christianity are seen (or portrayed) as a threat to the nation because they diminish the numbers of those united by the common national identity, presumed to be at least vaguely Hindu in nature.

The political effects of globalization on the CCTs are less obvious, perhaps, than the economic or cultural effects. Surely globalization alters the rules of the economic game in ways that, as indicated above, often advantage Christian groups, and in ways that present an obstacle to the economic advance of the CCTs that compete with them. In the same way that nationalists respond to the challenge of globalization by attempting to forge a common and unified political alliance against it, so, too, do the CCTs often attempt to unify against the Christian competitive challenge.

In Kandhamal, for example, the Kui Samaj, a pro-Kandha organization, had actively resisted a petition advanced by Pana Christians to have the official status of Panas changed from Scheduled Caste (SC) to Scheduled Tribe (ST). Panas had petitioned for the change largely, it seems, because members of SCs who become Christian lose their former eligibility for reservations, while ST converts retain their reservation rights even if they convert. Being classified as an ST, therefore (as the Kandhas already were), would have allowed Pana Christians to benefit from the reservation system even after conversion (Pati 2008; Samantaray 2008).

Moreover, the change would have placed Pana Christians in direct competition with Kandhas for local ST reservations.

The Kui Samaj considered the petition nothing more than a cynical ploy by Panas to gain economic advantage. In September 2007, the secretary of the Kui Samaj stated publicly (and with ominous prescience) that if the government approved the Pana petition, “it would lead to violent clashes between the two communities” (*Hindu Online* 2007). It was to press their concerns that the Kui Samaj planned a *bandh* (strike) for Christmas day, 2007. And that strike, joined as it was by local Sangh affiliates after the attack on Saraswati on December 24, not only allowed the riot violence to spread more quickly by idling the population and drawing attention to the issue, but also prevented an adequate police response (because of trees downed over important transportation arteries in preparation for the strike).

Cultural Effects

“In today’s global village,” writes Lobo, “Americanisation or flow of American culture is setting new reference points in the evaluation of beauty, truth, status, power and lifestyle” (Lobo 2002, 114). The introduction of these “new reference points” is often disconcerting for traditionalists (at both the national and local levels), because many perceive them to entail the loss of “traditional” culture (Ahmad 2007, 103).

It should be noted here that there is also a cultural challenge implied by both the economic and political effects of globalization. The globalization-induced shift from ascriptive to merit- and skill-oriented bases of status and employability is not just an economic shift, but also a cultural one. Likewise, the threat globalization poses to national sovereignty and self-determination is experienced not only as a challenge to the nation conceived of as a political

entity, but also to the “nation,” construed as a cultural essence. Mounting an economic or political challenge to globalization at the national level would no longer even be possible, given the dismantling of the nationalized economy and the surely unhappy political fate of any politician who at this point suggested stemming the flow of foreign investment. And so, contestations about globalization in India and elsewhere take place largely on the cultural plane.

And there again, Christianity poses a challenge to the Hindu nationalist agenda. As I have already argued, Hindu nationalists believe that the threat of globalization requires a unified national response, and contend that the basis of India’s unity is its Hindu-ness. But this claim requires the articulation of a broadly unifying definition of Hindu-ness, and that is difficult given the diversity of groups that might be labeled Hindu. In particular, Hindu nationalists are often stified in their attempt to articulate a broadly appealing vision of Hinduism by the fact that the Sanskritic overtones of their articulation does not universally appeal to *dalits* and *adivasis*. To counteract this problem, Sangh Parivar affiliates like the ABVKA have since the late 1990s begun establishing schools for *dalits* and *adivasis* where basic lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic are supplemented with religious teaching designed to bring *dalit* and *adivasi* religious beliefs and rituals more squarely in line with the more Sanskritic and all-India, upper-caste-oriented Hinduism articulated by the Sangh (Aaron 2007, 8; Hardiman 2002, 175; Lobo 2002, 57, 68). The existence of Christian educational facilities in these same areas, therefore, represents a competitive challenge and an impediment to progress of this Hindu nationalist project.

At the more local level, the CCTs also see in Christianity a cultural threat. The participation of non-Christian *adivasis* in the Dangs riots was not nearly as conspicuous as that of non-Dangi nationalists, nor even that of the Kandhas in the Kandhamal riots, yet they do

appear to have been at least marginally involved (Aaron 2009, 119–20). Their less active involvement may stem from the fact, as indicated above, that many of the Christian-initiated development projects in the region have also benefited non-Christian *adivasis*. Yet there did exist, in the period before the riots, some tension between Christian and non-Christian *adivasis* in the region. The tension was largely due to the sense, among non-Christian *adivasis*, that Christian conversion represented a kind of cultural disruption. Among other changes, converts to Christianity very often refused to drink alcohol, an important element of many Dangi religious and secular celebrations. More importantly, Christians tended not to participate in or contribute money toward village rituals if they believed them to involve “superstition” or “idolatry” (Aaron 2009, 115). The refusal of Christians to participate in such rituals was considered un-neighborly at best, and—since they were often conducted for the safety and prosperity of the entire village—potentially hazardous. In addition to these specific provocations, the very willingness of converts to break with village tradition is seen as a cultural threat (Satyakam Joshi 1999, 2673). “Due to conversions,” one Dangi BJP leader complained, “village social and cultural life has been disturbed” (2674).

Lambodar Kanhar, chairman of the aforementioned Kui Samaj and a prominent critic of Christians before and after the anti-Christian riots in Kandhamal, echoed this Dangi leader’s concerns: “How can we get along with [the Pana] Christians? It’s like cat and mouse. We don’t like the ways of even those who are Christians among the Kandhas” (Anand 2008). Many members of the CCTs therefore speak of conversion to Christianity as a kind of deculturation (or denationalization) in much the same way that upper-caste Hindu nationalists do.

CONCLUSION

If we look, then, at the wideranging effects of globalization in India, we see that Christians and Christianity stand symbolically for many of the worst of them. (Whether they deserve to or not is another matter, since in the case of anti-minority rhetoric and violence it is perception that matters more than reality.) Christianity represents the shift to merit- and skill-based (as opposed to ascriptive) status systems because of its penchant for establishing (and using to its advantage) educational institutions, training facilities, and co-ops. Similarly, Christianity symbolizes the challenge of foreign meaning-making systems because of its literacy programs (particularly those operating in English). Christianity represents the unwieldy and uncontrollable flow of foreign capital and investment because of the Christian community's ostensibly greater access to foreign wealth and power (which is perceived to reproduce the inequities of globalization). And then, of course, Christianity comes to be associated with the socially disruptive effects of globalization through its development work among *dalits* and *adivasis*, which inverts traditional caste and class hierarchies, both in terms of the relationship of those communities with higher-caste Hindus and in terms of their relationship with the CCTs. In addition, the Christian community comes to be associated with the secularist critique of Hindu nationalism because it demands the right to live and practice its religion freely, and because it demands the right to propagate its message through conversion. Moreover, the Christian community represents an obstacle to the nationalist project of identity homogenization not only by merely existing as a minority, but also by claiming (in the public debate about reservations) that *dalit* converts remain *dalits* even after conversion, thereby implying that *dalits* are *not* Hindus. In so many ways, then, Christianity represents all that threatens the "traditional" order, whether imagined by Hindu nationalists *or* by the CCTs. Hindu nationalists have done well to forge the rhetorical link between the challenge posed by globalization and that posed by the

existence of a minority Christian community. And, as I have argued, the CCTs have in many cases embraced that linkage because it gives voice to their particular concerns and serves their purposes as well.

Surely the theory articulated here does not account for everything. No theory, as I have argued, could ever do so. Moreover, it is not my intention to suggest that the other theories I have critiqued—the psychological, the economic, and the political—are invalid. Let me be quite clear in stating that I consider them valid as far as they go. As they have been articulated, however, they have rarely attempted to bring the local psychologies, economies, and politics they describe into conversation with the global psychologies, economies, and politics that so clearly affect and influence them. If, as Taylor (2009) has argued, all social phenomena is “webby,” then we would do well to privilege theories that both enable this local-global conversation and begin to demonstrate, as I have tried to do, how the political, the economic, and the cultural are interrelated.

I have not taken Taylor’s broader challenge, that is, to bring these “networks” of social and cultural phenomena into conversation with the biological or technological networks with which they also interact. But broadening the conversation about anti-minority violence to include the effects of globalization helps move us, I believe, in the right direction. And such a move is demanded by the analysis of violence against Christians, who, far more than is the case with Sikhs or Muslims, stand in as a proxies for those very effects. And whereas “globalization, being a force without a face, cannot be the object of ethnocide ... minorities can” (Appadurai 2006, 44).

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¹ I am not, however, suggesting that communal violence is, was, and has always been an essential element of the Indian body politic. Pandey (1990, 94; 2006) has convincingly shown that such a view was largely a colonial construct, one which served to bolster the legitimacy of imperialism.

² Despite the fact that the “riot” was a largely one-sided, anti-Christian affair, I use the term here to preserve some semblance of neutrality and to recognize that there was some retaliation by Christians, as noted below.

³ The St. Thomas/Syrian Christians are so-called because of their claims to have been founded by St. Thomas in 52 CE, and because of their historical connections with the West Asian Church of the East and use of a Syriac liturgy. Though many scholars doubt the community’s claim that St. Thomas arrived in the region in 52 CE, the community came into existence no later than the third or fourth century.

⁴ Many of these laws were also modeled on laws promulgated by princely states, such as Rajgarh, Patna, Sarguja, Udaipur, etc. These states were quasi-autonomous political entities under the British but became part of the Indian union at Independence (with several prominent exceptions, e.g., Kashmir). As part of that process the princely state laws were officially superseded by those of India and the states of which they became part (in which there were at the time no anti-conversion laws), and were thereby abrogated.

⁵ More wealthy Christians were specifically targeted in the Kandhamal violence (Bauman 2010, 272). The targeting of “advanced groups by backward groups” is a common feature of the “deadly ethnic riot” (Horowitz 2001, 179).