ANUSTUP BASU

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For Monu and Ritwik, with love

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of *Why I Am Not a Hindu*—a passionate and insightful "Sudra critique of Hindutva philosophy, culture, and political economy"—the intellectual and Dalitbahujan activist Kancha Ilaiah writes about a moment when he faced a vexing problem of identity. Born and raised in a small village in Telengana, Ilaiah hailed from the Kurumaa (shepherd) caste. It was only around 1990, when he was ending the fourth decade of his life, that he found himself in a new existential quandary. All of a sudden, the word *Hindutva* was being bandied around with fierce intensity, and the entire cultural machinery of the urban middle classes was insisting that he announce himself a Hindu. Refusing to do so would result in social castigation and a generally vitiated atmosphere. Ilaiah writes eloquently about why this was a nuisance:

> The question is, What do we, the lower Sudras and Ati-Sudras (whom I also call Dalitbahujans) have to do with Hindus or with Hindutva itself? I, indeed, not only I, but all of us, the Dalitbahujans of India, have never heard the word "Hindu," not as a word, nor as the name of a culture, nor as the name of a religion in our early childhood days. We heard about Turukoollu (Muslims), we heard about Kirastaanapoollu (Christians), we heard about Baapanoollu (Brahmins) and Koomatoollu (Baniyas) spoken of as people different from us. Among these four categories, the most different were the Baapanoollu and the Koomatoollu. There are at least some aspects of life common to us and the Turukoollu and the Kirastaanapoollu. We all eat meat, we all touch each other. With the Turukoollu we shared several other cultural relations. We both celebrated the Peerila festival. Many Turukoollu came with us to the fields. The only people with whom we had no relations, whatsoever, were the Baapanoollu and the Koomatoollu.[1]

Ilaiah's countermemory is a candid mapping of childhood instincts, familiarities, and identities. The "shock" of adulthood, for him, was being told that he had to now politically and culturally congregate with the Baapanoollu and the Koomatoollu and zealously distance himself from others. This was after some alienating school years in between, spent with Telugu textbooks that extolled unfamiliar Hindu gods like Vishnu or Durga, leaving out the ones he had grown up with: Pochamma who delivers from smallpox, Kattamaisamma who grants rain, or Potaraju who protects crops from thieves. It was thus an autobiographical journey that compressed profound historical questions of more than a century of nation and state thinking in the subcontinent, as well as its complex pendulations of identity. Ilaiah, from his own vantage point, felt that he was being coerced into joining a national majoritarian community that he, and people like him, never belonged to, in terms of piety or way of life. Later, he justifies the title of his book with a pithy and incisive sentence: "I was not born a Hindu for the simple reason that my parents did not know that they were Hindus."[2]

This powerful note of dissent points to the impasses in the way of what I will elaborate as a majoritarian quest for a modern Hindu political monotheism. If indeed the Dalitbahujans—an umbrella group in which Ilaiah includes the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs)—did not, in essence, consider themselves "Hindus," then the purported majoritarian specter of Hindutva would shrink to the sound and fury of a Savarna (upper caste) segment of the Baapanoollu and Koomatoollu that made up just about a quarter of the Indian population.[3] That too, with innumerable divisions among the Savarna groups themselves along the lines of class, culture, region, and language. The modern project of a Hindu political monotheism has been to induct the privileged and the pariah into a universal, congregational plane of Hindu identity. The question that Ilaiah, in effect, poses is whether the whole thing is simply a Brahminical minority's historical masquerade as a Hindu majority.

The book I present here is a long genealogy of Hindutva, culminating in a critical understanding of a mediatic and urban Hindu normative that has come into being in our times. It is not a presentist elaboration of what we are witnessing now, but a deep search of its historical origins. A good part of the recent story is, of course, quite well known. There has been the consolidation of a new techno-financial Hindu nationalist ideology with strong overseas connections over the last three decades, beginning, roughly in the early 1990s, with the globalization of the Indian economy, the rapid expansion

of the electronic public sphere, and accelerated urbanization. The process gathered strength in the aftermath of the mass movement leading up to the destruction of Babri Masjid in 1992, periodic communal riots that gradually took the form of institutionalized genocide, the border war with Pakistan in 1999, an increasingly volatile Kashmir, intermittent events of cross-border terror, and a global swell of Islamophobic sentiments after 9/11. This unfolding scenario birthed a new, muscular Hindu chauvinism with growing pan-Indian populist traction. The new version is one that is for a good part more urbane, tech-finance friendly, and different from older agrarian-conservative models. The political rise of this Hindu right culminated in the ascension of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Narendra Modi, when the party came to power in the Indian General Elections of 2014 with an overwhelming mandate.

But then, there is that other consideration: To what extent may this recent story of majoritarian insurrection in India be confined to the internal, long gestation of Hindutva, roughly from the 1920s? Or is it part of a wider planetary phenomenon, of people turning to default nativist positions, anti-immigrant sentiment, and xenophobia, prompted by a globalization of precarity, suspicion, and fear in the era of new media and finance capital? This book is a genealogy of Hindutva as political monotheism in relation to the colonial epistemological invention of "Hinduism," the broader arc of Indian modernity itself, and India's own constitutional revolution of 1950. At a secondary level, it ultimately aims to place the present Hindu ascension in a wider basin of global unrest, liberal crisis, and the rise of untimely chauvinisms like monarchism in Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil or neo-Ottomanism in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey. That is, not to mention the first-world theaters: the return of a Jacksonist "Know Nothing" nativism in Donald Trump's United States, or the ominous spread of neo-Nazi politics in Austria and Germany.

Hindutva as Political Monotheism looks at the long genesis of Hindu political identity and nationalism through a hitherto underused but critically important prism. I begin by visiting the works of the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt to draw out a tacit monotheistic imperative in European organic theories of religious and ethnocentric nationhood. Seen from that vantage point, the "oriental solution" would be that, in order for there to be a Hindu nation and a Hindu state, there had to be a Hindu monotheism. There had to be an axiomatic Church and a sense of Hindu laity that could then be parlayed into the political construction of a national *fraternité*. This was not just a question of affirming faith in one God (there have always been strong monistic currents

in the Vedic tradition and many theistic ones in the devotional Bhakti movements), but a religiosity with a strong eschatology and providential destinying. The tendency to impart an Abrahamic cast to a vast, eclectic field of polytheistic, pantheistic, henotheistic, or atheistic forms of Indic piety can be traced as a consistent feature in the modern invention of the Hindu as a religious and eventually jealous political identity. In nationalistic discourse, it meant finding a pan-Indian congregational principle to subsume long-standing caste divisions, regional eccentricities, gender segregations, and practices of untouchability. In terms of political theology, it meant compacting a pantheon of 330 million gods into axiomatic Hindu icons like Rama or Krishna, absorbing errant, syncretic pieties, and picturing a singular Hindu telos. Finally the project had to make this Hindu template politically indistinguishable from an "Indian" one. The consummation, devoutly wished for, would then consolidate the nation as an organic unity, making the profane federalism of the Constitutional Republic obsolete. I trace the genesis and progression of this quest for a Hindu "political monotheism" as a literary and culturalist project during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and eventually suggest that, in our times, it has been largely replaced by an advertised and informational Indian experience of urban normativity that some have called "Hindutva 2.0."

Chapter 1, "Questions Concerning the Hindu Political," connects Carl Schmitt's concept of political theology with some traditional notions of Hindu sovereignty and nationhood. I argue that the religious urge that defines the "political" for Schmitt—that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts"—is necessarily an austere and monotheistic one.[4] In order to have a majoritarian "Hindu India"—one that is an organic and religious whole rather than a contractual federation—one would need an "Indian monotheism" that was normatively Hindu. This may be marked, within the parameters of Schmitt's organismic logic, as an imperative for any people who want to emerge as a political entity deserving and capable of sovereign assertion. In polytheistic and polyphonic cultures of the global South, this was actually a tacit condition that the framework of colonial modernity imposed when it came to engaging with the modern state, nation-thinking, and political representation. In the case of India, the imperative came with the Indological apparatus and its nineteenth-century geopolitical invention of "India" and its traditions, along with the demographic and juridical marking of a Hindu people. This question of compelling political monotheism, to this day, determines the revival-

ist strong state/strong economy Hindu model in the epoch of globalization. The invocation of Schmitt, apart from the prima facie fascist connection, is justified because, as I will demonstrate more fully, Hindutva as an ideology is almost entirely orientalist in its roots. Historically, as we know, the Hindu project has been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it has birthed and generalized a puritan desire for a jealous majoritarian unity. On the other, it has faced considerable problems in its attempts to gather a multitude of faith traditions into a singular axiomatic of statist religiosity. I use the term *axiomatic* throughout this study as a singular religious passion that does not necessarily depend on theological consistency. The axiomatic, in this sense, is thus more of a techno-social regime of governmentality than simply a theologico-pastoral formation. I draw the idea for the most part from William Connolly's work on the American evangelical-capitalist resonance machine ("Cowboy Capitalism"): "An axiomatic . . . is a set of institutional knots with dense tangles and loose ends." It is not a static edifice of faith, but one that "twists and turns through time as it absorbs the shocks and additions created by previously exogenous forces." These exogenous forces include mutations in enemy axiomatics like Islam.[5]

In chapter 2, "The Hindu Nation as Organism," I point out some key bottlenecks in Hindu nation-thinking that followed the imperative of political monotheism, both in a Brahminical theocratic vein of imagining sacred territory, as well as in terms of a Hindu brand of ethnocultural nationalism. Here I talk about the twentieth-century discourse of Hindutva that, for the most part, operated with a set of Herderian pieties that never coalesced into a constitutive "whole" in terms of territory, identity, language, memory, and other crucial matters. Cultivating a unified Hindu theology for a monothematic religious passion and inventing a concomitant organismic nationhood were obviously very complicated missions in the essentially pluralistic civilizational complex of the subcontinent. It was perhaps because of this that Hindutva nationalism from the 1920s took a different route from earlier nineteenth-century regional reform organizations like the Brahmo Samaj or the Arya Samaj. The ideology of Hindutva sought a unifying ethnocultural consistency rather than a theological unity.[6] Such a development would be fine for the Schmittian model, which seeks a monotheme of religiosity rather than religion itself; and this persuasive principle could be based on race, culturalism, or ideology. The "political," as secular religiosity, had to simply present a captivating principle of martyrdom for a cause greater than the individual's own salvation. Similarly, in the discourse of Hindutva, there

could be no artificial distinctions between religion, ideology, and culture; and, after a process of torrid political abstraction, there had to be only one "way of life" for the nation.

I examine the works of the philosopher Bimal Krishna Matilal (1935–1991) to glimpse the breathtaking range of Indic "little traditions" of faith, memory, and poesis that an axiomatic Hindu Tradition would seek to engulf or extinguish. The little traditions were and continue to be based on eccentric vernacular appropriations of the great epics, imaginaries clustering around local saints, deities, or pilgrimage spots, and often on a primary disavowal of a Brahminical cosmology based on the Vedas. It was this mélange of pieties that the purported Hindu political monotheism had to violently append to itself or abolish. While the Abrahamic religions themselves have had numerous heretical traditions, the difference in the case of the historical Hindu faith complex was that no presiding ontological framework or instituted church existed, at the end of the day, to demand filiation to a singular theistic principle. This was a void that twentieth-century Hindu nationalist missions hoped to fill.

Hindutva was consolidated with the coming into being of Hindu organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS; National Volunteer Service), political parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jan Sangh, and, eventually, ecumenical formations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) that looked to establish a ministry with clearly defined political, pedagogic, and pastoral missions.[7] I explore this project as a literary-cultural enterprise in the writings of Hindu right-wing ideologues like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966) and Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906–1973), visiting especially the points of bipolar tension: the squaring of a Hindu homogeneity with the hierarchies of caste; the utopian restoration of a greater India (Akhand Bharat) with the geopolitical realities of partition; Hindu mythology with Indian history; the particularities of faith with the universals of science; the "Aryan" inheritance of the North with the Dravidian identities of the South; axiomatic icons like Rama with millions of gods; or a desired Sanskritization of culture with myriad vernacular countercurrents. Within the purported "Tradition" itself, there were many subsurface tensions that had to be resolved or mystified at every step. The political quest here was for a unified and jealous religiosity, marking the many-armed, eclectic traditions of subcontinental Islam as a competing monotheism. This was an originary polarization that, in the fullness of time, would birth a nation or two.

This twentieth-century vision of a Hindu India may be better illuminated by wrapping it in a temporal double bind. It has to be viewed in the light of its discursive antecedents, in terms of the broader nineteenth-century Indological identification of "Hinduism" and the discourses of Hindu reform, Hindu anthropology, jurisprudence, and history. And then it also must be seen from the other end, in terms of millennial mutations in the era of information and globalization. I therefore go further back in time in chapter 3, "The Indian Monotheism." It elaborates the quest for an axiomatic Hindu "religion," a historical sense of being, and a matching template for nationalism, revision, modernity, and secularism as a wider literary-theological project in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This axiomatic tended to assume the shape of a "monotheism" that was quintessentially Indian, as opposed to foreign imports like Islam or Christianity. Its early articulations followed the path of universal religion (or natural religion, as some of its Western interlocutors would say) and then gradually acquired jealous properties with the birth of nationalist discourses in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Here I discuss the works of Raja Rammohun Roy (1774–1833), Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894), Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), and M. K. Gandhi (1868–1948). The broader project was usually fronted by the abstraction of a neo-Vedantic monism—the Brahman as One—in relation to which the massive spread of Hindu polytheism, idolatry, and mythology had to be understood as allegorical approximations of a singular calling. This dispensation called for the elevation of the Bhagwad Gita as the Holy Book of the Hindu people, marked Manusmriti as Hindu Law, and cast figures like Rama or Krishna as Hindu ideals who offered greater prophetic revelations than Christ or the Buddha. The prime articulators of this modern Hinduism and of reform addressed the matter of caste variously: as scientific labor management, as original principle of communal and race harmony perverted by Islamic colonization, or as nonhereditary meritocracy. This overall enterprise came with a new time consciousness that challenged the temporal imaginary of progress postulated by a Calvinistic empire of capital.

I bookend this elaboration of a Hindu-normative Indian modernity, nationalism, and the secular with an introductory discussion of G. W. F. Hegel's 1827 reading of the Bhagwad Gita as theodicy, and with a concluding account of the powerful, foundational critique of Hinduism in the works of B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956). The latter, especially, points to certain endemic features of contradiction and dissonance that haunt this quest for a uniform peopleness. Politically, such questions would continue to resonate over the

decades and up to the present. From the vantage point of the Dalitbahujan, was the so-called Hinduism just a cover for Brahminism? Was the One of Advaita a warm universal, or was it cold, Sanskritic, and distant when it came to the vernacular masses? Was there such a thing called Hindu society, or was it just a confederation of castes that came together during communal riots? Could there actually be an axiomatic Hindu theology in the tradition of a Pauline Christianity, or do the scriptures, in the end, offer only a mélange of philosophical speculations inextricably mired in mythology and caste ethics? Did caste segregation and untouchability foreclose the possibility of a Hindu congregation and fraternité? Was a Hindu nation possible without a Hindu equity? My critical exploration of this nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tradition of moderate "reform" is not only intended to discover its secret commerce with the hardline Sangh Parivaar nationalism of a later moment, but also to understand the Savarna-normative nature of the secular Indian nationalist project itself.[8] That is, to see how an implicit principle of caste paternalism and tolerance informs the otherwise admirable Indian experiment in democracy and federalism.

I come to the present after these nonlinear excavations of a layered and weighted past. In the concluding chapter 4, "Hindutva 2.0 as Advertised Monotheism," I argue that, in recent decades, with the ushering-in of an informational world and networks of electronic urbanization, the literary-cultural project of Hindu nationalism has undergone fundamental transformations. Its defining themes and mythologies have been rendered spectral and auratic, no longer dependent on theological justification, literary elaboration, or historical apologies. This ecology comes with media protocols, ritual values, spectacle, and perception management; it involves instant, informational transfers between the past and the present, between science and dogma, and between the home and the world. "Hindutva 2.0," as it has been called, does not in essence seek long-pending, final resolutions for stories of becoming; nor does it present a unified worldview. Instead, it combines obscurantism with smart technophilia, the idea of financialization and progress with atavistic imaginations of time. It becomes an order of resonances rather than a closed book of the world, cutting across formations of mass culture and affect industries like Bollywood, consumerism, pop pieties, or yoga. It has its own modes of Disneyfication and a spectrum of industries from Vaastu, astrology, and herbal medicine to New Religious spiritualism and artful living. It includes Twitter and WhatsApp tribalisms that can create virtual congregations, bypassing caste strictures pertaining to custom, touch, food,

and water. I call this new ecology of Hinduness an instance of "advertised modernization," with modernization characterized as a mutating scenario in which "modernity" does not trump "tradition," but in which the two shift to a different threshold of performance and mutual arrangement. "Advertised" is a conceptual shorthand for varied, multidirectional pulsations in an electrified public culture that deliver innocuous "take homes," "feel good" nostrums, and, in some cases, consumable fears without narrative obligation to truth or closure. In its exemplary forms, this urban and advertised sense of Hinduness is incipient and neurological; it is meant to be felt in the pith and marrow of being, between terror and the global sublime.

The ecology creates a metropolitan normal, by which a caste Hindu urban existence becomes the only form of life worth living in a world in which both desire and precarity are democratized. It does so by excluding Islam and other minorities by way of calibrated discriminations, from terror management to segregated details of lived life like culture, language, hygiene, breeding, aesthetics, proprietorship of women, or eating habits. This normal is the bedrock of affectations on which the increasingly strident, organized, right-wing assertions of our times anchor themselves. In other words, RSS-type forces work on such a plane to exert long-pending but decisive majoritarian effects on the polity. However, the plane itself is wider than them, and it tends to define the entire political spectrum itself in terms of soft and hard Hinduness. Among other things, this order, on the one hand, entails a final turn away from the welfare traditions of the Indian state after 1947 and the history of anticolonial nonalignment; on the other, it entails embracing a set of military-industrial alliances with a continuum of metropolitan power stretching from Washington to Tel Aviv.

This isn't to say that there was not a Brahminical bias in the workings of the Indian state and society before this time, but the present electronic version comes devoid of many caste, regional, and cultural accents that once stood in the way of a working politico-religious axiomatic. In recent decades this electronic Hinduness has increased its powers as a psychological parabasis for a majoritarian nation. I draw the term *parabasis* from Gayatri Spivak's work and from its classical meaning in Greek theater: the period of a performance in which the actors leave the stage and the chorus addresses the audience.[9] In other words, I am interested in the historical roots of a relatively recent voice of a wider urban consensus beyond usual suspects such as the ardent disciple of Golwalkar or the angry foot soldier of Modi. It comes from a plane of consistency—in terms of massified common sense, structures

of feeling and perception—that seems to bind opponents together even as they disagree on matters like Kashmir, terrorism, corruption, development, or good governance. An insidious convergence of categories affiliated exclusively with a caste Hindu urban male existence seems to increasingly govern such democratic disputes. The idea of the parabasis as a choral unity, therefore, pertains to what Blanchot once called the silent "murmur" of discourse from which contending subjectivities erupt into being.[10] The feature that distinguishes this phenomenon from past forms pertains to the increasing metropolitan revision of regional eccentricities and the fervor for security and techno-financial growth. It is the possibility of a new, augmented dimension of the political in the Schmittian sense, an electronic Hindu political monotheism, if you will, surpassing the old impasses of print capitalism. In studying its long genesis, my objective is not to advance toward a prognostic reading of the present, since the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk. My purpose will instead be to explore, with some degree of speculation, the ground of the present.

1 QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE HINDU POLITICAL

Carl Schmitt and Political Monotheism

The relatively recent renaissance of hard-right thinkers of the state—such as Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, or Ivan Ilyin—can be, to a certain extent, explained by a general anxiety and introspection about the political legacy of liberalism. That is, a Rawlsian liberalism if you will, drawing a broad line from Locke to the American thinker, along with a parallel, more organic discourse of humanism from Hegel to his American neoliberal disciples like Francis Fukuyama. Including the latter—the formerly passionate and now slightly sober neocon—in that tradition might seem a bit provocative, but it also illustrates a broader problem in the horizon of Western universalism. If Fukuyama's historical monism has been frustrated, the recent wave of ethnocentric bigotry has also imperiled a notion of radical pluralism that Rawls deemed to be a permanent and desirable feature of modern democracies, not just a passing phase prior to assimilation.[1] In the old days, we would perhaps call Fukuyama's position center-right and Rawls's center-left. Not any longer, because a consensual middle ground, even in a dominant North Atlantic sense, can no longer be taken for granted. More than ever, the entire planetary scene has now become the crisis of a so-called centered paradigm of Bretton Woods governmentality that truly came into its own after the Cold War. This center has been muddled by strong currents of skepticism toward IMF/World Bank–style economism, especially after the 2008 crash, the rolling aftermath of the second Gulf War, renewed cultural and ideological wars, as well as by broader religious and ethnocentric assertions in general.[2] We have Lockean liberals and Burkian conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic trying to return

to purer ideologies that were eclipsed by the "neoliberal turn," fostered first by the Thatcher–Reagan counterrevolution and then continued by the Clintonian DNC and Blairite Labour. To put it differently, finance capital seems to have decisively shifted its core operations to the right of the normative grounds of liberalism. It has displayed a greater tenacity to delink itself from liberal pieties and assemble forces with authoritarian and overtly plutocratic regimes. The wretched of the earth seem to be responding to that variously.

The malaise pertains to losing grip over temporal imaginations across the world. Liberalism is currently beset by a poverty of hegemonic language, not just in terms of being and becoming, but even when it comes to matters like sustainable development, rights, or climate change. The unease has been increased by protracted military adventures, the financial crisis, outsourcing, automation, increasing government debt, austerity, the eclipse of the welfare state, a destabilizing Middle East, and the Syrian and other refugee problems. Many Westerners, it would seem, have awakened to an intuitive understanding that the American empire, in contrast to those of the past, has birthed global institutions that can, in principle, survive and flourish without the active participation of or benefit for white Americans and their Anglo-Saxon cousins elsewhere. One can be the roadkill of the empire even while being at the junction of all roads in Rome, while possessing Roman entitlements and doing what Romans do. Our times are therefore marked by increasing threats of the mighty United States returning to its pre–World War I isolationism while Britain effects a temperamental, almost distracted exit from the European Union. Western Europe is beset with a range of unflinching nativisms, both of the *jus sanguinis* as well as *jus soli* varieties. Globally, the crisis has unfolded a scene in which authoritarian cultures may merge with the paraphernalia of financialization without cultural liberalization; or in which formally installed democracies may not automatically foster climates of political freedom and tolerance. Developing societies seemingly continue to embrace technology in the fast track without "science" as a holistic horizon of reason. They may adapt themselves to instruments of globalization without absorbing enlightenment values, or revel in information culture without a civil society.

Circumstances seem to have called for a rethink of the manner in which the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt called the liberal bluff by denying its secular worldview an authentic ontology. All modern political concepts, Schmitt famously declared, were transposed theological ones. In other words, secular principles cannot stand on their own, basing themselves on universals per-

taining to human nature, interest, or reason in lieu of God. Such principles can be secondary, almost decorative derivations of peace only after a primal holy war between good and evil has been settled. Schmitt therefore prioritizes a primordial piety over other matters, such as sentiment, memory, language, constructivism, or catastrophe, that bind people together. Alternatively, one could say that whatever factor—eventful, emotionalist, or cultural—assumes the shape of the political must be driven by a passionate religiosity beneath all concealments. The modern state, with all its artifice of reason, its separation of church and state, can be rendered possible only after this concept of the "political" has been settled.[3] Schmitt's Faustian wager pitches this concept as a mythic sublimation that precedes other working postulates of civic life like the Kantian *sensus communis* or the Rawlsian "overlapping consensus." The political is already the deep, the incipient, the replenishing. Its perpetuation is a quiet but alert one, for it must always have the potential to harden itself instantly to a stance of sovereign, law-exacting, or law-destroying violence when the exceptional scenario presents itself. The political is a reckoning of submerged warfare that is always ongoing underneath the dead calm of social existence. Social contracts, constitutions, or charters of rights hide this primal conflict but are unable to eliminate its subcutaneous and raw presence. Normal political processes, as a matter of fact, are a continuation of this war by other means. As a result, when the social accord is fixed in a manner mindful of this simmering intrigue between friends and enemies, the nation-state ceases to be an unstable amalgam of distributed sovereignties (the Weimar Republic, in Schmitt's times) and emerges in its singular essence. It does so until time erodes the political itself.

Chauvinisms, therefore, can subvert liberal democracies for two reasons. Either liberal constitutionalism has overlooked or ignored an incipient but fundamental question of friendship and enmity, or the principle of homogeneity and friendship that it proposed has itself been spoiled by pagan or heretical contaminations. Liberalism should therefore understand that the settlement of the friend–enemy question is an originary matter over which it has no command. It can institute itself formally only after that primordial question has been settled and by being always aware of the results. Hence, per Schmitt's logic, the Hegelian state could work not because it is an infallible architectonic of reason but because it is based on a Christological civic religiosity that excludes the Quakers, the Anabaptists, and the Jews.[4] The latter can certainly be given rights and be considered objects of toleration, but they can never be citizens in the "active" sense. This spectral country-in-essence

is that which must be "taken back" from time to time, in extreme cases, from minorities, the bureaucratic government, or the legal and constitutional order itself. In other words, according to Schmitt, India can be a functional liberal democracy only after it is comfortably Hindu in an originary political sense, and the United States can return to a state of vanilla Rawlsian peace only after the country has been made WASP again.

I suggest a deeper study of the Schmittian notion of the political as a fundamentally monotheistic calling, not just a religious or theological one in a general, multicultural sense.[5] This is a mythopoetic automaton—unique and austere—that enables one to talk about the people and the state only after having categorically distinguished the believer from the infidel. The passion should be monotheistic or monothematic by secular transposition, because it has to be a singular impelling of devotion to the nation and the state. If we consider India as a modern postcolonial entity that has been historically bestowed with the apparatus of the nation-state, then the fiction of a "prepolitical" nation emerges. That is, a primordial picture of India before political models of the West were imprinted upon it. According to the Hindu right's vision of this prepolitical state, India was a (Hindu) civilizational conglomerate that had survived Islamic colonization precisely because the culture had largely managed to confine the state to mere military occupation. The Mughal regime, in that sense, was an "armed camp," as Perceval Spear once put it.[6] The state was not "political" in a constitutive sense; it had confined itself to tribute collection and was perhaps even what Karl August Wittfogel called the hydraulic-bureaucratic empire of oriental despotism.[7] This formation was generally compelled to leave diurnal Hindu life-worlds and communities alone and unconverted. Now, if that India is to be historically inducted into a modern politics of the nation-state, that is, if it is now to be constituted by politics rather than "have" politics, as Sunil Khilnani observed, and if that politics is to be covertly impelled by a monothematic religiosity, then it is the ardent belief of the Hindu patriot that the religious axiomatic should naturally be Hindu.[8] That said, it would logically follow that the nation can be achieved in its true essence only if the Hindu is allowed to settle very old scores with primal enemies.

This departure point is also where problems begin. Since we are talking about India, we have to refine the question of political monotheism in terms of creedal precision. In other words, there cannot really be an ontologically secure "Christian" or "Muslim" nation in and of itself—keeping in mind here Locke's perpetual heartburn with Papist intrigue despite his famed liberty of

conscience, the Irish Question in Britain, or, in a completely different historical context, the relationship between Shia Iran and what was once Sunni-controlled Iraq.[9] By that measure, a destinying project for Hindu India becomes an incredibly complicated proposition, given the common perception of the faith as a polytheistic religion featuring a pantheon of millions, with wide disparities in customs, rituals, and cosmologies of belief. Even a denominational grouping under the general canopy of Vedic Brahminism becomes a byzantine affair, with the caste system and the general syncretic presence of a breathtaking range of heterodox sects like the Aghoris, the Lingayats, the Kabirpanthis, or the Ravidasis.[10] This is a formidable plurality we will look at in the next chapter. For the moment, let us mark the purported enemy.

The question of creed remains equally complex when we consider the history of Islam in the subcontinent and the role assigned to it as the competing monolith to an essentially Hindu India.[11] The majority of Muslims in the subcontinent have been Sunnis following the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, but then there have been the Shias, early Qarmatian groups and their remnants, the eclectic Sufi spread from Sind to Bengal, the Ahmadis who recognize a final prophet succeeding Muhammad, the Dawoodi Bohras, Khojas and other Ismailites, the Nawayaths of Konkan, the Mappilas of Malabar, the Kayam Khanis of Rajasthan, and dozens of orders that reside on a spectrum between Hindu and Muslim orthodoxies.[12] Historically, royalist Islam in India—from the Delhi Sultanate to the Mughal dynasty—has always been afflicted by tensions between the orthodoxy of a Sunni clergy establishment (Sharia) and the popular mysticism of the Sufis (Tariqa) or the radical disavowals of all earthly authorities by Ismailis or Qarmatians. With the advent of the Chishti, Suhrawardi, and Firdausi sects between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, it was Sufism that emerged as the prime missionary force of Islam in the subcontinent. Later groups, like the Shattari, the Qadri, or the Naqshbandi, impelled by the pantheism of the Andalusian scholar and mystic Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), entered into rich syncretic and vernacular commerce with Hindu devotional sects. Active in the Punjab, they would contribute to an affective universe that would birth, among other things, the Indic monotheism of Sikhism.[13] A. Azhar Moin's remarkable study has shown how the Mughal emperors, Akbar in particular, established a new form of sovereignty by styling themselves on the lines of Sufi saints. It was a form of kingship based on the charisma of holiness (*wilayat*) and a principle of tolerance (*zimmi*) rather than religious law (*sharia*) or holy war (*jihad*).[14] In all, Imtiaz Ahmad has postulated three registers of Islamic practice in India. The

first would be marked by traditional scriptural governance of a pan-Islamic kind; the second by local, customary deviations in religious behavior, including birth or death rituals or popular celebrations of Muharram; and the third would unfold to an eclectic cosmology including Muslim saints, Hindu gods, and a vast spectrum of beliefs pertaining to deliverance from disease, famine, misfortune, or malevolent spirits.[15]

For Schmitt, the unitary impelling of the political can of course have declared religious dimensions—as in Anglican England, Protestant Germany, or Catholic Spain—but more importantly, it must give rise to a monotheme of identity. The political must birth a concomitant religiosity that could be based on race, on ideological world view (like Russian Bolshevism in his time), or on ethnicities of various kinds. The citizen is, ultimately, an acolyte who requires an overt or covert ontotheology to worship the state and identify enemies. The Christian postulate of turning the other cheek, in that sense, applies only to members of a tolerant brotherhood and not to enemies like Saracens or Turks. Seen in this light, the Hindu nationalist phenomenon, as we shall see, exists between two conceptual poles: Hinduism as a denominational religion, and Hindutva as an ideology of cultural or ethnic nationalism that ostensibly is not reliant on a single faith but that reserves the sovereign right to arrange different Indian beliefs along a spectrum of normalcy and pathology.

I seek to bring the Schmittian diagram of sovereignty and the thought of an axiomatic Hindu nation into a critical relationship with a historical field of problems. The task is to lay out a constellation of themes, rather than to insist that the two are absolutely the same. But first, a couple of caveats. Why make Schmitt "travel" to this Indian context? Does his diagnosis supply us with some essential truths about the human condition or about the things that motivate humans to form stable nation-states? The answer to that would have to be no, since there are too many exceptions to the Schmittian rule, which—despite his passion for Hobbes and Machiavelli—relies too much on an organic model of national peopleness as an a priori assumption.[16] Schmitt himself would not be so hopeful about the stability or sovereign capacities of multicultural, large nation-state formations like Canada or India. Nevertheless, I find the Schmitt–Hindutva intersection interesting for three reasons. First of all, one can chart and detect a consistent monotheistic imperative working throughout the modern discursive invention of "Hinduism," even from its earliest inception in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Imparting an Abrahamic cast to a multitude of faiths was deemed essential

for a proper denominational identity, political representation, and, in the fullness of time, nationalist imaginary. Second, as I have stated, the Hindu nationalist imagination itself is for the most part thoroughly orientalist and Eurocentric. Third, when this nationalism acquired an institutional form during the political mobilization of the 1920s and 1930s—around the time of Schmitt's writing and around the time of his Nazi turn—it was directly inspired by European fascism and a set of Herderian cultural-historical pieties. However, what makes Schmitt really pertinent is his idea of the jealous and monotheistic distinction between friend and enemy as the essence of the political. This has been at the core of Hindu nationalism's political project of a masculinist modernization of the traditional Hindu faiths and their flocks. The invention and focalization of jealousy has been essential to dispel the pluralism, otherworldliness, mysticism, and pacific nonviolence attributed to the religion by a nineteenth-century colonial religious anthropology.

Let us create a conceptual clearing by way of an elaboration of some Schmittian concepts pertinent to the project. While Schmitt's idea of Volk is organic, his conception of the state is not organic, as it had been for the romantics: it is instead much closer to a Hobbesian mechanical model. On the other hand, Schmitt's problem with the English political philosopher—despite Hobbes's understanding of sovereignty as a decisionist principle—is that Hobbes begins with the contract itself and not the primordial that comes before the contract and determines it.[17] This primordial is a settlement of the question of friend and enemy. It is primal in relation to the great themes of the European Enlightenment: aesthetics, reason, morality, or economic interest. It is also beyond the judgment of the individual, for one cannot have a private enemy (*inimicus*) in the political sense; the enemy is necessarily and already public (*hostis*). Some of the individual's best friends, therefore, may eminently be political enemies. The enemy is not determined by profit-based reasoning, for one can engage in lucrative trade with him. Similarly, he is not necessarily the morally evil or the aesthetically ugly, just as the friend is not always the virtuous and the beautiful.[18]

Schmitt was not the first to define the foe, but he certainly was one of the first major thinkers of the right to address enmity as a domestic concern rather than a matter confined to interstate relations. This becomes a matter of special import in a late modern era marked by the hardening of nation-state boundaries after the great wars and decolonization. There is an implicit understanding that informs classic Western social contract theory: the recalcitrant who refuses to accept the contract is free to leave the city or commonwealth

for an "outside." This theme is found in the works as well as the political lives of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau.[19] Exile in that historical landscape was not necessarily a fatalistic or negative measure. It pertained to lines of flight to wider Europe and indeed, in terms of a stellar example, to the New World. In the late modern era, when the "frontier"—as a Eurocentric and essentially racist imaginary—is either closed or imperially monopolized, the domesticity of the enemy becomes acutely abject in character. Her humanity is then to be measured in terms of a nation-statist arbitration of her refugee status or immigration rights. Apart from Syrian refugees, the Rohingyas of Burma, or the left-liberals and Muslims in India who are often told to go to Pakistan, the abject domesticity of the enemy should remind us of Hannah Arendt's poignant observations about citizenship and human rights in the age of totalitarianism.[20] "Human rights," as a universal postulate, is Kantian in its spirit; however, it is only the particular nation-state that can guarantee its actual existence. The Nazi Final Solution to the European Jewish problem became a decision in Schmitt's exceptional times, during which the industrial extermination of the enemy was a rising option, while the possibilities for exodus had diminished severely.

The political is decided by a primal pathology prior to self-conscious peopleness; it therefore has to be an already-there organic unity. It cannot be associational or contractual precisely because it must express a singular and undivided will before reason and talk can proceed. Schmitt's political theology therefore necessarily defines the bearer of the political as a monotheistic congregation, jealous of any apostates, pagans, or heretics in its midst. It is the fervent religiosity that is important, not the religion itself, unless the religion acquires the capacity to invite sons to martyr themselves for a cause greater than their individual salvations.[21] In its elemental expressions, the political is a crusading mission. Within the domestic scene, the postulate assumes a particularly chilling form when Schmitt insists that the primary requirement for a working friend–enemy distinction is that an exterminating war should be a real possibility for both parties.[22] The state can be lean and mechanistic, but it has to respond to this sum of all fears at every step. The exception is the scenario in which the available juridical resources of the state are unable to meet that requirement and a secular miracle is needed to save it.[23] This miracle is a sovereign intervention—in its pure dictatorial and decisionist aspect—in the form of war against the enemy at home. It can also be a perpetual civil war as an index of relentless determination or purification.

These connected themes, of categorical jealousy to the point of exterminating violence and of the increasing military-industrial foreclosure of exile, make the refugee a central figure in contemporary fictions of sovereignty.[24] The specter of the concentration camp, in our occasion, haunts Trump's detention centers for Latino immigrants at the United States–Mexico border or the ones established for antihomosexual purges in Chechnya. It hovers around the National Register of Citizens (NRC) project that the present Hindu nationalist government in India has reactivated in the Indian northeastern state of Assam. According to early projections, this digital bureaucratic rationalization of a disproportionately poor and unlettered population threatens the residency and citizenship of four million people, predominantly Muslims. There is the looming danger of these people being reduced to an abject state of fatelessness if Bangladesh refuses to accept them.[25] The government has already promised in advance to mitigate any troubles of the non-Muslim population through the 2016 Citizenship Amendment Bill, which gives illegal immigrants from all religions except Islam an automatic pathway to citizenship, in blatant violation of the nondiscriminatory Article 15 of the Indian Constitution. The BJP, for its part, has promised a pan-Indian application of the NRC in its 2019 election manifesto, and Amit Shah, its president, has declared illegal immigrants to be "termites." The figure of the Muslim in contemporary India—imperiled by ghettoization, civic marginalization, a fearful culture of public lynchings, retailed acts of molestation and murder, systemic criminalization, and the prospect of an elemental stripping of citizenship rights—therefore reminds one of a chilling question that will resonate in various moments of this study. What will happen to the 200 million Indian Muslims if that long-cherished Sangh Parivaar dream of Hindu Rashtra actually comes to pass?

Peopleness, for Schmitt, is a metabolic phenomenon in the body politic prior to any juridical justification. That is also why such a people—in essence instinctive and infantile, in an Edenic state, and yet to bite the fruit of knowledge—needs a jealous God, around whom and around whose eventual secularization Schmitt constitutes his now famous description of sovereignty: The sovereign is he who decides on the exception.[26] The exception, in the sphere of the political, is paralogous to the miracle in theology because both God and the monarch who rules with divine right must intervene when people forget themselves from time to time in an endemic condition of sinfulness.[27] Primordial peopleness is thus to be distinguished from the historical predilections of an actual citizenry that might be confused, ill-informed, or