

## Acknowledgements

As is often the case for works of this nature, this book could not have been achieved without the generous assistance, guidance, and encouragement of many people in many places. I was fortunate to work with De Gruyter Open and the excellent editor of the series, Ishita Banerjee-Dube, who wholeheartedly supported the project of turning my dissertation into the book you are holding in your hands. I found in Ishita Banerjee-Dube a fantastic scholar and, above all, a warm human being who took an authentic interest in my work. Katarzyna Tempczyk and the De Gruyter Open staff were patient and supportive, and I believe I could not have picked a better publishing house to bring out this book.

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my beloved wife, Anurādhā de Alba, who patiently believed in my dreams and made them her own. Next, my gratitude goes to my parents: To my mother Vidulā, who has always believed in me. I am who I am today because of her, and to my father Arturo, who has always taught me to love what I do, and to always believe in the power of searching for my own truth.

My fellow colleagues and friends from the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg provided me with a unique interdisciplinary environment that expanded my horizon and set the bar high through their excellent scholarship. In particular, I owe thanks to everyone in our department for their generous support and disposition to help whenever I needed them. I would like to express my appreciation here for Prof. Axel Michaels, who was my *Doktorvater* and whose guidance made this work possible, and also to Prof. Jörg Gengnagel, who kindly agreed to be the second reader of my doctoral dissertation. Pandit P. Aithal was very helpful and patiently enlightened me in many aspects of traditional Sanskrit learning. Another special mention goes to Prof. William Sax and his doctoral students from the Anthropology Department — with whom I spent a good deal of time in their weekly doctoral colloquium — where I found not only amazing academic input, but also wonderful friends who I value beyond academia. Jürgen Schaflechner, Max Kramer, Sarah Ewald, and Swarali Paranjpe deserve a special mention here for their unconditional support in academic and non-academic matters, and for their wonderful friendship.

Many friends and scholars beyond Germany also contributed to this dissertation. In particular, I thank Prof. Madhav Deshpande, Prof. S. S. Bahulkar, Prof. Ganesh Thite, Prof. T. N. Dharmadhikari, Prof. Cezary Galewicz, Prof. Fred Smith, and Prof. Tim Lubin, who were extremely helpful and generous with their knowledge. Additionally, I thank individual persons at various scholarly institutions, in particular Hema Patankar and Ugrasena Kempter from the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute, and the staff of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, as well as the Vedaśāstrottejak Sabhā in Pune, who helped me to conduct enriching research in India and allowed me to join their wonderful chai breaks. I also thank the Maharṣi Sāṃdīpani Rāṣṭriya Veda Vidyā Pratiṣṭhān in Ujjain and the Maharṣi Ved Vyās Pratiṣṭhān in Pune for all their support. A special mention goes to Patrick McCartney and Jennifer Collins for carefully going

over the manuscript and correcting not only my English mistakes, but also asking pertinent questions and offering insightful comments and suggestions.

Financially, I owe my gratitude to the generous support of the National Council of Science and Technology of Mexico (CONACYT), who granted me a scholarship in partnership with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) over all these years. Here, I would also like to acknowledge the fantastic support of Ms. Stephanie Büchl from DAAD, who often seemed to do the impossible to help me. I also thank my dear friends Barbara and Aldo Montanari for their loving support that made my fieldwork possible.

In India, there are many people who opened their homes to me and made me feel like one of them. I extend my gratitude to Swati Patwardhan and her beautiful family in Pune; to Arjun Kale for his generosity, hospitality, and good humour; to my friend Samrat Shirvalkar for his kindness and help with Marathi; and to three women I esteem and respect: Aparna, Malvika, and Kalyani Jha.

My greatest admiration and gratitude goes, however, to all the learned *vedamūrtis* and their students of Maharashtra who allowed me into their lives and taught me about their world. In particular, I thank Śrī Vivekśāstrī Goḍboḷe, his family, and all the students of his school for their hospitality, wisdom, and inner beauty. Nānāji Kāḷe and his learned sons and grandsons in Barshi embodied for me not only Vedic wisdom, but also kindness and magnamity. My *praṇāms* go to all of them.

Many other people who have gone unmentioned have helped me profoundly in preparing this work, and I am deeply indebted to all of them in many ways; however, as the usual academic warning goes: any errors or shortcomings in this work are completely my own.

Finally, I dedicate this work to our son Kabīr, who has already brought so much light into my world.