

# Contents

## Acknowledgments — V

## Introduction

### Rethinking the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as Political Theory — 1

Reputation: Political and Academic — 3

The Problem of Ideology — 7

Indian Political Thought and the (Non)Standing of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* — 11

Developing Indian Political Theory: The Case of Mahatma Gandhi and Role of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* — 16

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* and Epic Context: Toward a Political Reading — 25

## Chapter 1

### Political Integration in an Age of Strife: *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Epic Context — 36

Contextualizing the Cosmo-Political *Bheda* (“Split”): Temporality and Cosmology — 37

Time, Cosmic Entropy, and Processes of Political (Dis-)Integration — 42

A Weapons Show and Lacquer House: (Dis-)integration Through the Fire of Competition — 47

The Daughter of Fire and Bridegroom “Choice”: Political Integration through Draupadī — 49

Partition, Abduction, and a Forest Fire: Pāṇḍavas Waxing — 52

Conclusion — 59

## Chapter 2

### Ascetic Arjuna: (Im)Mortal Self as Political Battlefield and Becoming a Yogic Hero — 61

Micro-Politics and the Material World: Ontology of the Self as Political Battlefield — 62

Get Yoked! Yogic Ruling, Dharmic Disinterestedness, and the Politics of Effacement — 67

Fire Imagery and Political Unification — 73

Heroism and Goodness through Devotion — 79

Conclusion — 82

### Chapter 3

#### **King Kṛṣṇa: Cosmic Self, Monarchy, and Devotional Integration — 83**

Kṛṣṇa's Cosmic Pervasiveness and Upholding the World — 85

*Dharma* and the Nature of Justice — 88

Conscience and Necessary Violence: Kṛṣṇa's Internal Dialogue and Relationship to Arjuna — 94

Henotheistic Politics Revisited: *Bhakti* (Devotion) and Monarchy — 100

Justifying the Decision to Fight — 104

Conclusion — 111

### Chapter 4

#### **Modeling a Brahmanical Political Ideology — 113**

A Realist Lens: Power, Political Ideology, and the Storyworld — 116

History Matters: Lost Prestige and Apocalyptic Narrative — 120

Countering Aśoka and Justifying Puṣyamitra: Harmlessness, Liberation, and Legitimate Violence — 125

The Role of Public Imagination: Ideological Time and Political Mythology — 129

The Ideology of Kṛṣṇa and *Bhakti* — 136

Conclusion — 139

### Chapter 5

#### **Hindu Nationalism and Indian Democracy: Contemporary (Dis)Integration in the Kali-Yuga — 144**

Theory in Action: Ideology and Hindu Nationalism — 148

Temporality: Cyclicity and Universalism — 149

Ascetic Idealism: Dharmic Disinterestedness, Self-Control, Purity — 156

Integrated Politics in Divisive Times: Plurality, Devotion, Unity — 161

### Chapter 6

#### **Neo-Hindu Authoritarianism, Narendra Modi, and Ideological Subversion — 167**

### References — 176

### Index — 183