Acknowledgement

This is to express my gratitude to all good wishes, inspiration, guidance and cooperation, I received from various quarters while pursuing the present research.

First of all, I would like to convey my regards and the earnest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Ravi S. Srivastava for his valuable suggestions, kind cooperation and constant encouragement. In spite of his varied responsibilities and very busy schedule, he has always made himself available for discussions. He gave me enough freedom to think independently and guided painstakingly through all the years of this study. This thesis could not have been written without his advice, inspiration and cooperation.

I would like to record my gratefulness to Professor S. K. Thorat, Chairperson, UGC, who guided me in the early phase of this study prior to his present assignment.

I remember with respect the inspiration and help of Late Prof. Ashok Mathur for undertaking this study.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University, especially of Centre for the Studies of Regional Development.

I am indebted to my mother and sister for their constant help, moral support and encouragement since the beginning of this study. I am extremely grateful to my husband, who accompanied me even in the tough days of field work. I owe to my son Debapratim for not being able to devote enough time for him which he deserves. I am also thankful to him, Anushree, my sweet niece and my brother-in-law for their constant inspiration in a number of ways.

I am indebted to Director, other members of the faculty and staff of Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Institute of Economic Growth and Indian Institute of Dalit
Studies for extending their help in many ways. I am immensely thankful to the villagers and officials of Panchayat, Block Development Office and RI office of Bardhaman and South 24 Parganas District. The study could not have been conducted without their insight and valuable information.

I express my gratitude to Professor. H. Ramachandran and Dr. Alok Narayan Sharma, who motivated me to pursue this doctoral work. I am grateful to Shri Anup Karan and Dr. I. C. Awasthi for giving their valuable suggestions.

I am thankful to Shri Swapnil, Shri Anil and Shri Madan for computer assistance,

Throughout, friends remained a constant source of inspiration and help. I express my sincere thanks to them.

I apologise for any unforeseen error in this work.

Sanchita Bhattacharya

Sanchita Bhattacharya