ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the outset I extend my special thanks and gratitude to the people of the eight selected Gram Panchayats, who extended all cooperation, despite their preoccupation with livelihood, for interaction. Their contribution has been of immense help throughout the preparation of the paper.

My sincere thanks to my revered teacher and supervisor without whom the study would not be complete. I will ever be grateful to him for his guidance, patience and dedication towards my work. I would specially like to thank the members of the Ph.D Committee, Department of Political Science, Calcutta University for their constant support and encouragement.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Block Development Officer and staff of Darjeeling-Pulbazar and Kalimpong I Block, to the Gram Panchayat staff, to the District Panchayat Rural Development Officer and staff of District Panchayat Rural Development Department, to the Project Director and staff of District Rural Development Cell and to the staff of the District Magistrate Office, for their kind support and assistance, despite their daily busy schedule. The study would not have been simply possible without their valuable information.

I acknowledge the continuous cooperation received from the various working members of non-government organizations, hill organizations and missionary organizations, such as, the Centre for Mountain Dynamics, Sisters of Notre Dam, Cluny Sisters, Panchwati Greentech Research Society and Himalayan Farmers Front.

The help received from the resource persons and officer bearers of the clusters and the several members of the Self Help Groups, in the collection of data and information stands acknowledged. I would also like to thank them for inviting me to several meetings.

I would also like to offer my gratitude to the Human Resource Development Department, Government of Sikkim and the Headmaster and staff of Chhalamthang Junior High School for all their help and support.
My special sincere thanks also go to the various libraries and book stores which took personal care to provide me with immense information. Deshbandu Library, Darjeeling, National Library Calcutta, Calcutta University Central Library, Calcutta University Alipore Campus Library, State Central Library, Gangtok, Oxford Book Store (Darjeeling), Upasak Pustakalaya and Sajha Pustakalaya need special mention in this regard.

I would like to thank Shankar Chettri, *Mali* (Gardener) of Darjeeling-Pulbazar Block Development Office, who was my guide for the field trips to the selected Gram Panchayats. I am deeply indebted to the families in the villages for their warmth and hospitality during my stay in various localities.

I personally must convey my thanks to my parents who have always been the pillar of strength, my in-laws for their support and bearing with me and Sesemesama, my wonderful loving daughter, for being so understanding throughout my work. I am also grateful to all other members of my family for their constant inspiration and moral support throughout the preparation of the dissertation.