When people would hear that I was working on the history of the Andaman Islands it did not take much to guess that I was apprenticed to Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya. This thesis bears his intellectual imprint. His critical eye helped sharpen and also sandpaper the various contours of my writing. My work was further enriched by Prof. Bhattacharya's incisive comments, and its canvas widened by a wealth of readings that he constantly suggested. A 'quiet source of strength', I wish to express my deep gratitude towards him.

I take this opportunity to also thank my teachers Prof. Madhavan Palat, Prof. Mridula and Aditya Mukherjee, at the Center for Historical Studies and Dr. David Baker, Dr. Upinder Singh and Dr. Tasneem Suhrawardy at St. Stephen's College and Prof. C. A. Bayly, Dr. Gillian Sutherland, Dr. Kate Bennison, Prof. John Illife and Dr. Melissa Lane my teachers and tutors at Cambridge, who guided and strengthened my resolve to pursue historical research. They have molded and shaped my understanding of history over the last ten years.

During the course of writing this thesis discussions with Prof. H. P. Ray, Prof. Radhika Singha, and Prof. Ranabir Chakravarty, from JNU, at various stages proved extremely valuable. Outside my immediate academic circuit I greatly benefited from discussions with Dr. Gautam Bhadra, Dr. A. R. Venkatchalapathy, Prof. Lakshmi Subramanium, Prof. Richard Grove, Prof. Prabhu Mohapatra and Prof. Suhash Chakravarty. I would also like to express my thankfulness towards my friends, colleagues and students at Miranda House where I have worked in the capacity of an adhoc lecturer for the past two years. The pleasant work atmosphere made the tedium of a grueling routine easy to bear. Indian Council for Historical Research has played the role of a generous financier in the writing of my thesis. I received handsome grants at distressing stages of my thesis from the Council in the form of a JRF, Study/Travel Grant and the final submission grant.

During the course of my fieldwork I incurred intellectual and personal debt of many individuals. I would like to acknowledge the assistance extended by Lt. Gov. of Andamans and Nicobar islands Sh. N.N. Jha, Master Kesar Das, a retired school teacher, Sh. Gauri Shankar Pandey and Mr. M. A. Mustaba and his sister Ms. Ume Salma of the Aberdeen
Bazaar, Sh. Swapnesh Chaudhary, the Director of the National Memorial Cellular Jail, and Naw Ahmay and her husband Pradhan from the Webi Village. My special thanks to Sh. Madan Mohan Singh at the All Indian Radio, Port Blair, whose help in conducting the interviews of convict descendent families was invaluable; Sh. Purushottam Srivastava in Lucknow, a treasure trove of information on Andamans, has served as an education officer in Andamans for decades; Dr. T. N. Pandit, the head of the Anthropological Survey of Port Blair and now living in Delhi, deepened my understanding of the aboriginal life; Mr. Abdul Salam, a Moplah whose father was brought to Andamans as a convict, for providing the copy of Thanesari’s memoir and his impeccable hospitality; and last of all Sh. Janardhan Shukla. Shukla Sahab a male nurse in the mental ward of the Port Blair hospital lived amongst the Onge tribe of Little Andamans for several years. Notwithstanding his humble station in life Shukla Sahab possesses rare human qualities. An unsung hero, his life remains a source of inspiration to me.

I would also like to thank the staff of the libraries and archives which I have consulted in the last four years. Dr. Jaya Ravindran, Dr. Probir Roy and the staff at the National Archives of India, Central Library of the National Archives, Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, Central library of the Archaeological Survey of India, Central Secretariat Library, Library of the National Memorial Cellular Jail, The State library, Port Blair, the library of Archaeological Survey of India (Port Blair branch) and the Forest Department Library, Port Blair, National Library Calcutta, West Bengal State Archives, Suchita Guha-Thakurta at State Archives in Writer’s Building, and Prof. Chitta Panda, the Director of the Victoria Memorial.

Taresem, Praveen and Indal helped me with the typing and scanning. I am grateful for their prompt and cheerful service. My thanks to Supreme Furnitures for providing a scanner and computer facilities at crucial moments, Aditi Anand for copyediting the chapter on Labour, and Tillotma and Anjali for reading and commenting on the introduction. I am thankful to Tristram Stuart and Alice Mathers for the various references and books.

I also remain indebted to my friends and family members who shared moments of my life during this research. Uncle Alok Mukherjee, Aunty Sukla and Oindrilla provided pleasant
distractions in the boring Calcutta evenings and excellent Bengali food. Arup's family and parents and Sh. B. P. Jain and his family in Calcutta were extremely generous with their hospitality. With Sabby, Namrata, Madhu, Amit, Nonica, Sin Ee, Ahila and Radhika, I have shared moments of joy and despair. To elder brother, S. M. Afsar, I remain obliged for diligently translating Thanesari's book in Urdu; to Archana didi for being an engaging holiday companion and reading through the final draft of the thesis; to my friend Qurratulain Haider for editing it; and to Abbas and Anamta, who provided playful distraction. I am grateful to my brother Suparn, my grandfather Lala Rameshwar Das Gupta, and my parents-in-law Sh. Sher Singh Sanweria and Mrs. Omwati Sanweria for constant encouragement.

This work would not have been possible without the support and patience of my parents Dr. Ved Pratap Vaidik and Dr. Vedwati Vaidik, and my mate Anil Sanweria, and it is to them that I dedicate this thesis.

APARNA VAIDIK