Preface

Social differences have existed in almost all societies since times immemorial. These differences are often interpreted as forms of inequality. Eversince, they have also been the cause of many a war in human history. Based on these inequalities, societies are stratified with a firm hierarchical social gradation. The Indian social reality has had its own ritual system of hierarchy and social gradation of individuals based on their ascriptive status. The social situation which ensues from this very gradation has both mythological and religious sanction and persists till date emphatically. Thus we felt the need to study modern institutions and organisations within this specific socio-cultural milieu.

In this study we attempt to understand the professional culture of the medical profession with a sociological perspective. An effort is made to highlight the value gap between theory/ideology and reality in three specific sub-themes. They include (i) the adherence of the professionals to the professional ethics, (ii) the impact of the professionals' primordial identity on the medical profession and (iii) the State's protective discrimination policy with respect to medical profession.

In the discussion which follows, we focus on the adaptation of the traditional micro-structures such as caste within the secular, democratic and egalitarian society - which is predominantly characterised with its modern institutions and organisations. Our major contribution is that we attempt to examine the structural and cultural continuities of the traditional society in the modern medical profession.

To undertake and carry out such a study which is the first of its kind was a tough task. It is the affectionate guidance of my supervisor Prof. Yogendra Singh that
kept me going all through my work especially during the prolonged period of field study. My interaction with him has not been merely a process of learning sociology; it also made me ‘live’ sociology. Moreover, he sensitised me to develop a social consciousness and understand several events and issues with a sociological perspective. I owe my deepest gratitude and thanks to him.

I also take this opportunity to thank Prof. J.S. Gandhi who introduced the specialisation of sociology of professions. The several discussions I had with him during the course work period kindled the necessary interest in me to take up this study on medical profession.

I am very thankful to Prof. K.L. Sharma for all the interesting discussions we have had both during course work and the later period. His course on theoretical approaches highly inspired me and created a neat theoretical grounding.

I also owe my thanks to Prof. Imrana Quader. She contributed a great deal during the centre’s vivas. She sensitised me to the problem dimensions of the Medical system and Health services of the country.

I thank all my teachers at the Centre for Study of Social Systems for inculcating in me an academic outlook. I thank the staff of the Centre for Study of Social Systems, Mr. Talwar, Mrs. Sunita and Mr. Bharat for making me feel at home and specially for answering to all my technical and official queries in a friendly fashion.

I also thank Dr. Negi and Mrs. Sengupta of Council for Social Development, who helped me with my statistical analysis.

I earnestly acknowledge all the doctors and hospital authorities for their cooperation during the field work.
I thank all my family members for their blessings and support. Though many miles away it is their well wishes which saw me through.

Special thanks to my husband, for it would not be an exaggeration to admit that without him this work would not have been possible. His sincere involvement since the days of formulating the topic for study is in fact a great blessing.

Many of my friends spared much of their time and I thank one and all of them. My special thanks to Sudha who patiently read through my manuscripts. I also deeply acknowledge Bindhu who meticulously proof read all my drafts. I sincerely thank Hari for his help during my field work. I also thank Malli and Shazia who helped me with my work in their own ways. I owe a lot to Arvinder Kaur Banga. I cherish all the discussions we have had all through our stay at JNU. My special thanks to Lalitha and Ramu for providing me a warm home at Delhi.

I profusely thank the Library staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, American Centre Library, British Council Library and Ratan Tata Library.

I extend my acknowledgements to University Grants Commission for providing fellowship for my Ph.D programme.

Last but not the least, I thank Mr. Anil, Mr. Shibu Pulikkottil of M/s.A.P.Computers, Mr. Batra for an efficient and timely word processing.

K. Lavanya