Acknowledgement

My interest in politics stems from the desire to inculcate through both life and work, the ultimate idea which provokes any interest about society, hauntingly captured by Walter Benjamin: "It is for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us".

This work is a dialogue with my history. It reverberates with the two most popular names in politics I encountered since childhood. It was much later I found how the controversies surrounding these names provoked varied reactions in different people. I realized those differences mattered according to how each has faced and learnt a certain history. The ifs and buts of arguments regarding the way one looked at Indian history provoked the desire to study it. Like Nehru, I too wanted to discover my past, and find out what links me to it, what doesn't, and why. I wanted to find why Gandhi is so easily mistaken or understood, as he both openly and stubbornly experimented with politics and religion.

As much as I owe this thesis to the numerous, unfinished discussions with friends and others, I also have a special place for JNU itself, which made it possible in the first place. JNU is like a thoughtful heart placed defiantly within the rather flagrant body of Delhi. Sometimes it listens to us and sometimes we listen to it. Often it surprises us and sometimes it disappoints us. But it is impossible, for anyone to deny having felt here, how we cannot always take ourselves more seriously than others.

My guide, Rajeev Bhargava, is a man with a persuasive temperament, a suavely critical mind, and an unmistakably liberal heart. I have often found how his skeptical attitude to dazzling ideas helps the mind to consider things more judiciously and distinctly. He reminded me of what I was told in childhood: "Never try to climb the tree in one leap". On a more personal note, I found one could so easily do things for him, and undo them only with difficulty. If knowledge is primarily about relations between people - the first principle of ethics - he has it in good measure. Everything else really follows from there.

I have always wanted to be lucky only about friends and the fortune has been granted. Though I can't fail to mention someone responding to this with the quip, "But the question is, have they been lucky with you?!" Nevertheless, my friends have been those faces and voices, who never failed to generously lend me their most difficult and passionate sentiments. Without them, no melancholy or joy is completely shared, no wine so memorably sipped. Upal Deb, who guided me to literature, contributed to whatever aesthetic depths I could gather in life, and enriched my passion for destiny. My mother, who has always been more interested in her children than in gods, is the only person before whom I will always remain a fool. Richa, to whom I owe my heartbeats, is a name that rings of everything that connects me to this world.