Acknowledgements

My supervisor Dr. Susan Visvanathan has influenced me both personally and professionally. I cannot thank her enough for her encouraging words and her guidance all through the 6 years that I have been working under her. Her comments greatly helped me in improving the quality of my work. Her empathetic understanding at all times was a great comfort.

I would like to acknowledge many people who have made this thesis possible.

Thanks to Mr. Narayanan for taking great interest in the research and for being kind enough to host me during one phase of my fieldwork. He gave me an opportunity to observe the functioning of a contemporary Chettiar household. Thanks also to Mr. Narayanan Sr. for sharing his views on various issues and Balambigai Aachi for explaining a number of lullabies and also letting me record them.

Thanks are due to Mr. Sashidhar, Shri. M.M. SP. Subramanian and Mrs. Yeppamai aachi for introducing me to Chettinad.

I am grateful to Menakshi Aachi who has been my main informant and my hostess for three long phases of fieldwork. She arranged many of my interviews, accompanied me to various Chettinad villages, and shared her views on all issues. For a while my thesis had become her thesis! By closely interacting with her I could understand the plight of a separated woman in the community. Her loving concern despite her numerous problems touched me.

I am thankful to Dr. T. Chockalingam former Head of the Tamil department, Alagappa University, for his long discussions on the history of the Chettiars and for letting me use all the material that he had.

Dr. K. Thyagarajan, former Dean of Annamalai University provided me some valuable contacts and Mr. Venkatachalam Yadav shared his views as a non-chettiar whose family had been working for generations with the Chettiars. Thanks to them both.

I am grateful to the Trustee of Chetty Temple in Singapore, Mr. Sathappan for enlightening me about the changed role of the temple and also providing a list of Chettiars in Singapore.

Grateful acknowledgements to Mr. S. Muthiah for sharing his views with me despite his busy schedule and permitting me to use the map from his book.

Thanks to Dev and his family at Madurai for their hospitality, for the concern while in the field and for arranging my stay during the last leg of field work in a matter of hours. To Kokila, for refreshing me with her perspectives and for all the wonderful moments that we had at Madurai.

To bright, young Saiva Thurai who safely took me to unknown territories and for sharing his views on Chettiars and the region's history.

I would like to thank all informants who willingly gave their time, patiently responded to queries and put me on to further resourceful people. Without the help extended by the Chettiars this study would not have been possible.
I have made use of the facilities of many libraries in the past five years. I would like to thank the following libraries. JNU Central Library and Chief Librarian Dr. Muttayya Koganurmath for rendering all possible help, CHS DSA Library, Women’s Studies Programme, Nehru Memorial Library and its excellent staff, Alagappa University Library for letting me use the Raya Sow collection of journals and Madras Archives.

Mr. Krishnamoorthy and Mrs. Dorothy’s personal collection at Gnanalaya Library, Padukottai gave me the rare privilege of staying inside a library stacked with 40,000 books. I am thankful to them for their hospitality.

I would like to thank Prof. Panini for having ‘introduced’ the Chettiaros to me and for providing me a list of readings on Banking and Credit, Prof. R.K. Jain for taking personal interest in the research and his kind concern and Dr. Vijaya Ramaswamy of CHS for giving me an outline of South Indian Medieval history and reading suggestions. I have learnt much from my esteemed teachers Prof. T.K. Oomen and Prof. Avijit Pathak during my initial years in JNU which I cherish and for which I am thankful.

I thank the ICSSR for providing me financial assistance for a crucial two and half period which enabled extensive fieldwork. Special thanks to Mr. Madhukar and Mrs. Revathy Vishwanathan of ICSSR for their kind countenance at all times.

Friends in the hostel—Janaki, Smita, Poonam, Sara & Mona for their kind concern.

I am thankful to Ravindra and Gitika for their suggestions and support and to Sailaja for her encouraging words at all times.

Arun is the proverbial ‘friend in need’ for my entire family; it would be silly to thank him though I wish to acknowledge his support.

Archana has filled a void in my life with her enriching friendship. It is tough to thank her for any one reason.

My association with Bindu goes back to my college days and she has been instrumental in showing me the way to JNU. In a sense she has witnessed a decade of my intellectual as well as personal development. I am glad and grateful that Bindu & Sanjay are here to see me through this as well in spite of their punishing schedules.

Special thanks to Mr. Jawed for without his help the thesis would not have been in its present shape.

My Parents and Kumar have supported and motivated me all through these long years. All that I have learnt about life I have learned from them, but while I have been away from them, Kumar has been my idol since childhood. I cannot think of a better way to thank than dedicating this thesis to him. Bharathi’s loving concern and empathy has touched my life in many ways and is the most precious addition to our family. Baba has been with me through troughs and crests, patiently borne my outbursts and has always been confident of me—much more than I am about myself. They are my pillars of support. There is no way I can thank them but I can thank god for bringing them to me.

Finally and most importantly to the University that has given me much to reminisce all my life!