ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and efforts of a number of individuals.

First of all, I would like to offer my gratitude and thanks to my supervisor Professor Chandan Kumar Sharma for his patience and time for supervising this study. He devoted his times with an extra effort to go through my arguments in every possible way. I thank him for his time, patience, and immense generosity and encouragement.

Special thanks are due to Professor C S Bhat for his inspiring words and encouragement. I express my gratitude to Professor M K Choudhuri, the Vice-Chancellor of Tezpur University, for his keen interest on this work. His constant inquiry about its progress played a crucial role in its completion.

I am grateful to Dr. N K Das, Dr. Shashi Bhusan Singh and Dr. Joydeep Baruah for their support and suggestions in carrying out this study. Professor B. K. Danta has been a continuous source of encouragement. I offer my thanks to him.

I am indebted to all those people who patiently and kindly responded to my questions in their homes, workplaces or on the roadsides during the course of the field study. I would also like to record my sincere thanks to various government officials and panchayat members in Sonitpur district for various important information and documents provided to me.

I must thank Jagreeti, Piyashi, Kuntala, Prarthana, Dola, Antora and all others who helped me in their own special ways in completing this study. I thank my students Partha, Prafulla and Ransaigra, who are not in the department now but teaching in different places, for their support.

I thank my friends and colleagues Kedilezo Kikhi, Rabin Deka, Sumesh, Nirmali, Sarmistha and Salah from the Department of sociology, Tezpur University for their unstinted support and help. I am much grateful to my friend Tathagatan who always enriches my understanding with his critical comments and suggestions. I also thank Subhadeepa and Sailen for their comments on this study. I acknowledge my thankfulness to Surit Das and Vivek for their kind help and assistance. I also thank Babu (Jugal Deka) for helping me in designing the two maps of the villages under study.
I owe my gratitude to Dr Neshat Quaiser and Dr. Rabindra Ray, who have always been sources of inspiration to me, for their encouragement during this study.

I thank ICSSR-NERC for funding a small research project on election studies in the Sonitpur district. I also thank Tezpur University for supporting me during field work with a grant.

I acknowledge my gratitude to various libraries which I visited in connection with my research especially the Central Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University and Ratan Tata Library at Delhi School of Economics, Delhi. The online resources of Tezpur University were also a very useful source of relevant literatures.

Finally, my family needs to be acknowledged for helping me with their emotional support through various difficult phases during this work. I am grateful to Sheetal, Atu, Anita Dei and other family members for their encouragement and support.