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I began the PhD journey with the motivation to start a career in research. During this time I changed my job from the Government of India to the Apparel Export Promotion Council (India) and working on trade data, we chose the area of PhD to be from trade. My earlier education and training in technology proved to be a strength and hence we developed our essays from multi-disciplinary perspectives. My supervisor, Dr Biswajit Nag of Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) was quick in recognizing this strength and suggested the topic with ‘select issues’ – this was indeed thoughtful. He also suggested focusing on our first publication in an international journal to learn from the reviews. The publications gave me great confidence in the arduous journey. Thanks to great support from Dr Pinaki Dasgupta of IIFT, I moved to full-time teaching and joined Auro University, Surat. The supportive environment in Auro University, particularly the encouragement from the Vice Chancellor, Dr Kamlesh Misra, stimulated me to complete the dissertation work on time. Dr Debashish Chakraborty of IIFT has been very supportive and he also provided us the Efficiency Management Software for Data Envelopment Analysis. Vineet Gupta, my PhD batch-mate working in IIFT, was my true ‘friend in need’ as he helped us with almost every administrative work with IIFT.

My supervisor, Dr Biswajit Nag, was not just a PhD guide but also a close friend. I could even confide with him my fears and tribulations that I went through in office. He is my mentor and provides me unbiased opinion about many professional issues. One unique thing about him is his candidness – once he laughingly quipped “Unfortunately PhD guides have earned a bad name these days. There are so many comedies of PhD students doing daily chores of their guides ….” There is another case, when I spoke about the voluminous size of very old theses which I saw in the archives of a library of a leading University, he said “Check the quality also. Those statistical tests are considered very elementary these days because now we have well-developed software applications.” My supervisor also helped me improve my limitations – I had no clue about how to write chapters of a thesis; I am more a ‘quantitative’ researcher. This journey has helped me to learn about writing a long full dissertation.
The support from home was crucial – my wife, ‘Moon’ patiently went through the same arduous journey of my change in jobs and career. She has been my life partner for over a decade and has always seen me in some academic pursuits or other all through. She has silently borne my late-night work and almost complete absence from domestic chores. My parents, my father in particular, motivated me constantly. When my parents were not living with us, I could not travel to visit them because of my pre-occupation with the PhD work. Now that my father is living with me, he felt proud to see the work. I am the proud father of a child with special needs (autism), born in 2005, named Shitij. He is gifted but has not been able to join a regular school. This PhD work has also denied him my attention that he would need. But our bonds have only strengthened. The purity and spiritual meaning that he has brought in my life is a major strength for me. PhD has not been an exercise of intellectual arrogance but the process of detailed research and humble presentation of big-scale ‘academic’ work. I am sure that my son though not attending regular school will someday read this thesis and be motivated to become a better researcher than me.

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Above all, I am grateful to God for healthy life and opportunity.

Though we have done our best to avoid any typographical or other mistakes, it is possible that few may still be present. Needless to mention, I am solely responsible for any errors and omissions.