ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely thank my supervisor, Prof. Sujata Patel, for encouraging me to embark on the exhilarating journey of this thesis during my early 50s. Her careful shaping of my work is evident throughout this thesis. She introduced me to numerous readings, provided me with books and articles, guided my thoughts with scintillating conversations and allowed me to reach my own conclusions at the end of the discussions. I am grateful to her for her immense and crucial contribution in making this thesis happen, in spite of her relocating to the Central University in Hyderabad, mid-way. I also thankfully acknowledge Sujata's father (and Gandhian educationist), Shri Vajubhai Patel for his gentle presence, affection and zest for life.

I am obliged to Prof. Sharmila Rege, Director, KSP Women’s Studies Centre who constantly enriched me with her insights and experience. With her strong feminist academics, understanding of local idiom, and deep commitment to Dalit women’s issues, she encouraged me to weave my experience as a feminist interventionist into the thesis. Prof. Vidyut Bhagwat, also a member of my expert committee, gave me the emotional impetus to undertake a rather complex methodology. Her insights into the resistance of women during the past many centuries, and her confidence in my work have been tremendously important for me.

I gratefully acknowledge the unstinted cooperation given to me by the Head of the Department of Sociology Prof. Swati Shirwadkar throughout the past few years. I also thank the faculty members of the department, namely Dr. Shruti Tambe, Elizabeth Songate and Sanjay Kolekar for their suggestions on my chapters and bibliography, and their constant encouragement and cooperation. The office staff of the department, namely Sanjivani Shelkande, Chandrakant Yemtekar, Nitin Pharate and Dynaneshwar Chandere need grateful mention for their smiles and ever-readiness to help out with university related processes. Similarly, Dr. Paramjit Anthappan's friendship helped to expedite processes in the University of Mumbai.

The members of my Ethics committee, namely Dr. Medha Kotwal Lele, Simrita Gopal Singh, Meena Seshu and Dr. Hemalata Pisol gave thoughtful consideration to the form and content of the work throughout; from the first proposal to the
methodology, and to reading every chapter carefully and commenting on the same. Medha, Simrita and Meena’s long-term support and friendship, and Hemalata’s inputs in coding and classification of information were of crucial importance.

I am grateful to Prof. Suhas Palshikar and Prof. Rohini Saini for giving ideas and encouragement through the past three years. Similarly, the friendship of the KSP Women’s Studies Department has kept my morale up at all times.

Dr. Vishal Jadhav read all the drafts of my chapters over the past one year. His ideas, encouragement and suggestions for improvement have been invaluable for me. He and Dr. Anurekha Chari Wagh also walked the journey of the PhD work along with me. Their camaraderie and friendship have been priceless. Prof. Prem Chowdhry reviewed a paper (based on Chapter Four) that I wrote for one of MASUM’s publications on honour related crimes in South Asia. I am grateful to her for her incisive comments and encouragement.

My fellow MASUM trustees Nirmala Sathe, Anwar Rajan, Anita Borkar and Dr. Ramesh Awasthi granted the sabbatical for me to pursue my PhD. The entire staff of the city office of MASUM gave me the physical and mental space to work and went out of their way to help me with typing, tape-recording, transcribing, discussing ideas, getting books and suggesting readings. Shraddha Chickur, Ravindra Thipsc, Leela Faske, Sopan Wadkar, Vilas Indalkar, Archana More, Anupama Pathak, Yogita Pole, Sadhana Avchat, Sangita Kumbhar and Jyoti Jadhav need special mention, as do Srishti Agnihotri who interned, and Sumati Unkule who worked part-time with MASUM. The same is true of MASUM’s rural staff that whole-heartedly supported my decision to do my PhD. All the participants of the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were my rural colleagues - they have been acknowledged in Chapter Four. I cannot thank them enough for their lively discussions and unstinted love. This thesis further strengthened our friendship of two decades, and provided one more opportunity for late night chats and laughter. I also thank all the rural women and men who taught me humility, and who shared joys, sorrows and wisdom with me during the years of my stay in the village and thereafter. Without exaggeration, the daily struggle of subordinated women forms the heart of my work.

Yaswant Bhosale, Kiran Moghe, Sarika Sinha, Asim Sarode and Dadu Bule helped me to locate respondents for in-depth interviews. Deputy Inspector General (Prisons)
Shri Ravindra Kedari, Superintendent of Prisons (Yerawada) Shri R.T. Dhamne, District Probation Officer Shri Rahul More, superintendents and senior staff members of remand homes, namely Ms. Asha Dimdime, Ms. Manorama Sonawane, Ms. Mokate, Ms. Wagh, Ms. Dhende, Ms. Nair, Devendra Dalal, and Shobha and Vikas Kadam were cooperative and sensitive to the needs and rights of incarcerated respondents. I am grateful to them for their commitment.

How can I adequately thank all the respondents of the in-depth interviews? All I can do is to remain in their debt forever, especially because many of them have had to remain anonymous due to the terrible circumstances of their lives. The immense trust they placed in me compels me to hope that I have not let any of them down, and to trust that my work does justice to their pain, poignancy and indomitable spirit.

My parents Shalini and Vasant Gupte; both freedom fighters and trade unionists created the setting for my ideological initiation. Their easy juggling of gender roles and their politics, which included deep compassion and honesty have stayed with me, even after they are gone. Similarly, comrades and colleagues from various social movements over three generations have not only enriched me, but have also respected my relative hermitage during the past couple of years.

I cannot begin to count my blessings for having Girija as my sister, a treasure of political and personal support. She and my brother-in-law, Dr. Vidya Nidhi Awasthi read the synopsis and engaged in intellectual discussions as well. The entire Gupte and Awasthi extended families have always been my source of happiness, having accepted the unusual life-style we adopted with full respect.

Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, my partner is the anchor of my life. For more than three decades he has been supportive in public and private life, quietly taking care of MASUM and home in more than equal measure. Gratefully, I also acknowledge the exciting presence and unconditional love of our children Prateek and Priya.

All shortcomings in this thesis are mine alone, for which I beg forgiveness, because it was impossible to pen down all that I saw and gained from people and books during the past four years. I hope to return to grassroots interventions with renewed energy and hope, having learnt tremendously from reading, writing, from people mentioned above and equally importantly, from the lives of my respondents.