I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Professor Muzaffar Alam, who suggested me to analyse and utilize the *Reeti* poetry as a source of history. My attempts to understand society and culture in northern India during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century were made under his supervision. I also received his valuable comments and careful guidance in interpreting the *Reeti* literature. Above all, it was his affection and encouragement that went a long way in helping me to sustain my interest in such a tedious and seemingly endless research.

I am grateful to the librarians and the staff of many libraries, notably, Nagri Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi; St. Michael Library, Varanasi; Allahabad University Library; Hardayal Municipal Library, Delhi; Marwari Sarvajanik Pustakalaya, Delhi; NMML (Teen Murti); ICHR Library; Dr. Zakir Husain Library, Jamia Millia Islamia; Sahitya Academy, Delhi, JNU Library and National Museum Library. Mr. Nardev of ICHR and Mr. Padmanabham of Sahitya Academy deserve special thanks for helping me in locating the books at the earliest.

Acknowledgement is also due to ICHR for a fellowship of two years during 1993 and 1994. I record my sense of obligation to my mother, who inspite of her old age and ill-health, extended unfailing support, emotional and otherwise. The great concern of all the other members of the family has also been a definite morale booster during these years. The divine soul of my father has also been a constant source of inspiration for me. I also feel deep gratitude towards friends who deserve acknowledgement not simply as a matter of ritual but because they have helped me in more ways than they could.

Last but not least I must thank Saubhagaya Systems for the final lay-out and printing of my thesis.

(SANDHYA SHARMA)