

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey would not have been possible without the incessant support of my teacher Dr. Kedilezo Kikhi. Thank you Sir, for being the better mentor than I deserved, for genuinely being interested in all my undertakings in the research front. Teaching me the nuances of the academia and patiently supervising this study, in the process instilling in me your infectious enthusiasm and unlimited zeal for social science research. I could never have explored research in Sociology without your unwavering encouragement at every juncture.

Maa, without your selfless love, support and critiquing I would not be able to achieve anything. This thesis is also an outcome of the strength and will-power you have instilled in me, thank you. Baba, wherever you are I know you are always with me, thank you for watching over me.

I am indebted to Bah Banteilang Rumnong, Bah Rothell Khongsit, Morningstar Khongthaw, Bah Bipul Thangkiew and Lalita Chetry, for their relentless assistance during field work. Sincere gratitude to everyone in my field who have taken out time to respond to my enquiries, sit through patiently during long interviews and for those welcoming smiles.

Thankful to Indian Council for Social Science (ICSSR) New Delhi, for awarding me the doctoral fellowship 2014-16.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr. Amiya Kumar Das for the constant motivation and valuable suggestions. Thanks also go out to Dr. A. Nagraj for being the cornerstone all these years. Dr. N. K. Das has been a constant source of encouragement.

I express my gratitude to Professor M. K. Chaudhuri, Vice-Chancellor, Tezpur University and the administrative staff of the university.

I am thankful to the faculty members of the department of Sociology - Professor M.A.Kalam, Professor Chandan Kumar Sharma, Dr. Rabin Deka, Dr. Sumesh, S.S. Dr. Nirmali Goswami, Sarmistha Das, Dr. Subhadepta Ray and Dr. A. S.

Shimreiwung for their valuable inputs. Special thanks to Dr. Salah Punathil for the unstinted support. Thank you goes to Pranita S. Talukdar and Jogen Das, staff members, department of Sociology, Tezpur University.

I extend my gratitude to various libraries and its staff members which I visited for the research work especially State Central Library, Shillong; North Eastern Hill University Library; ICSSR Library, Shillong; NEC Library, Shillong; DBCIC Library, Shillong; NESRC Guwahati; OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati; Gauhati University Library; Tezpur University Library; Department of Sociology Library, Tezpur University; National Library of India, Kolkata; IIT Kanpur, Library. I am also obliged to several academicians and scholars from Shillong who have kindheartedly shared their personal collection of books and articles that has benefitted my work.

I would like to acknowledge Swikrita Dowerah, Gunajit Dev Sarma and Dipam Patowary for helping in designing the maps. All the driver bhais who drove me around safely to and from enigmatic locations.

Thank you Jagritee, Hima, Riju, Purabi, Jinty, Natasha, Reetamoni, Ashutosh and Tanuj for all the fun moments we shared and constant support. Pinku, Gayatri, Kuntala, Pinky, Kausar and all my dear colleagues, thank you for being there. Forever grateful to MCJ group for the unceasing prayers and smiles that keeps me going. Saurabh Karn, Saptarshi, Saurav Kumar, Subharthy and Roktim, thank you.

Thank you to my sister Pashmi for stirring the idea in me that 'It's Not Over Till It's Over' and believing in me. I wish to express my unqualified thanks to Sandeep, for decisively motivating me to work resolutely, being a constant emotional support in tough situations and eternally remaining positive. Forever beholden to Zirfan, for being there.

Special thank you to the critiques from all quarters for the constructive criticisms that has abetted me to toil hard.

Piyashi Dutta