## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have supported and contributed to the completion of this Ph.D. thesis. First and foremost, I am immensely thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Maitree Vaidya, for her constant guidance, encouragement, and invaluable insights throughout the entire research journey. Her expertise and unwavering support have been instrumental in shaping the direction of this thesis. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Head of the Department of History Prof. Aruna Awasthi for her valuable feedback during the writing process and for motivating me throughout my Ph.D. journey.

I am deeply grateful to the Dean Faculty of Arts Prof. A.B. Saxena, and other members of the Department of History, Prof. Vibhuti Parikh and Dr. Dilip Kataria for their constant support and guidance. I also extend my gratitude to the non-teaching staff of the Department of History, Mr. Nilesh Dave, Mr. Rameshbhai, and Mr. Naresh. I also thank all staff members of the Faculty of Arts, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat.

My special thanks are also due to all the libraries and repositories I visited, especially Gujarat State Archives (Gandhinagar), Baroda State Archives (Baroda), Central Library (Baroda), Hansa Mehta Library (Baroda), Maharashtra State Archives (Mumbai). I would also extend my gratitude to the online libraries, archives, or repositories Shodhganga, Internet Archive, The Centre for South Asian Studies, Indian Culture Portal of Government of India

I have been really lucky to have a wonderful group of friends and colleagues at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara. Their support has been a crucial part of all my accomplishments. I thank all of them. I am indebted to my friends and colleagues Dr. Bharat Diyora, Dr. Hridesh Ranga Mourya, Dr. Monika Sharma, Garima Singh and all the Ph.D. scholars of the Department of History. They have provided essential assistance, stimulating discussions, and moral support during the highs and lows of my academic pursuit. Their camaraderie has made this journey more enjoyable and fulfilling.

I extend my deepest and humblest gratitude to my parents Mr. Ayodhya Prasad Soni and Mrs. Maya Soni for their boundless love, patience, and understanding. My soulmate Mr. Raviraj Soni, I am forever grateful to have you by my side. Your unwavering support made my Ph.D. journey possible. Thank you for being my rock and believing in me always. I would like to extend my thanks to my in-laws Mr. Chandrakant Soni and Mrs. Meena Soni for supporting me and trusting on me. I would extend my heartfelt thanks to the pillars of my family, my sisters Neelima Di & Apoorva Jiju, Poonam Di & Saral Jiju, Anjali Di & Niraj Jiju, Krupali Di & Amar jijusa, Jayraj Bhai & Varshaben. Their constant encouragement and belief in me have been a source of strength throughout this challenging endeavor.

I am also grateful to the participants and volunteers who generously contributed their time and cooperation to this research, without whom this study would not have been possible.

Last but not the least I want to express my deep gratitude to Universe that have guided me on this academic path, and for bestowing upon me the opportunity to pursue knowledge.

Sonam Soni