ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this book would not have been possible without the support and contributions of numerous individuals and institutions from Australia, India and Europe. I am deeply grateful to each and every one of them for their assistance and encouragement throughout the process. I have had the privilege of undertaking several research positions in Sydney, Oslo, Delhi, Heidelberg and Zürich. These opportunities have played a significant role in refining and completing the initial drafts of the book. The Research Council of Norway, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship generously provided the financial support that allowed me to actively dedicate my time and energy to the writing and rewriting process. Their funding has played a pivotal role in the timely completion of the book.

In Sydney, I would like to express my immense gratitude to Devleena Ghosh. Her unwavering support, both personally and academically, was instrumental in navigating my life at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). I am indebted to her for providing the necessary support and to her husband, John Brewick, who also extended his help by reading the initial versions of my chapters. Comrade John not only displayed a keen interest in reading my drafts but also frequently extended invitations for me to join him in watching ‘footy’ and international cricket matches, offering a welcome respite from the monotonous life of a researcher. The Brewick family, including Paul, Cindy and others, embraced me as a part of their own, offering me a home away from home. Their generosity and kindness will forever be cherished.
The academic support provided by Heather Goodall, Christina Ho and Deborah Nixon also deserves my sincere acknowledgement. Their invaluable feedback and consistent interest in my academic journey have been immensely valuable. Furthermore, I had the delightful company of some friends and colleagues, namely Bhuva, Devaki, Burcu, Ruchira, Bilquis, Tatum, Pingo, Suman, Naleya and Marie. Their friendship and shared experiences not only made the academic work more enjoyable but also provided a supportive network that greatly enriched my time in Sydney.

Kathinka Frøystad at the University of Oslo has always been very supportive and many academic conversations with her shaped the overall structure of this work. The mentorship of William Sax at Heidelberg University during my research stay as an Alexander von Humboldt postdoctoral fellow proved instrumental in refining my arguments and broadening my perspectives. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Sax’s insightful feedback and continuous invitations to engage in research colloquiums greatly improved the half-baked drafts. During the challenging times of the pandemic, the vibrant presence and support of other colleagues and friends—Philipp Zhemisch, Sandra Joost, Vicky, Heri, Torben, Pallabi—added a touch of brightness and eased the pain of our work. Their camaraderie made me sail through rough waters.

Similarly, my academic mentor and host for my second postdoctoral project, Harald Fischer-Tiné at ETH Zürich, constantly encouraged me to complete the book and embark on writing a second monograph. Countless conversations with Harald over coffee or lunch have directly and indirectly influenced the making of this book. I also acknowledge the incredible camaraderie and support from the team members and friends at ETH Zurich: Bernhard Schär, Elena Valdameri, Monique Ligtenberg, Denise Lim, Nikolay Kamenov, Claire Blaser, Josephine Selander, Tomaš Bartoletti, Eliane Schmid, Martin Roth and Miu Woodrow. Their kind company enriched our daily academic and non-academic conversation.

I am immensely thankful to Robert Hayden for his excellent suggestions. A serendipitous interaction with him led to an intense exchange of ideas and critical remarks on an earlier version of the book. Amar Farooqui and Ramchandra Thakran, too, provided a much-needed support to my academic career, and I sincerely thank them for their precious guidance in my early days as a novice researcher.

My friends in Delhi—Manish, Saurabh, Arun, Pushp, Vinay, Gagan, Anuj and Sanjeev—deserve a special mention for their patience in listening to the stories told in this book. They have always inspired me to become a better researcher.
The book would not be complete without acknowledging the libraries and expressing gratitude to the staff members at various institutions. These include the UTS Library, New South Wales Library, Delhi University library, Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, Oslo University library, Heidelberg University Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, ETH Zürich D-GESS Library and Zürich Central Library. Their assistance and guidance were crucial in accessing valuable resources. At Cambridge University Press, I would like to extend my thanks to Sohini Ghosh, Anwesha Rana, Saniya Puri and Priya Das for their outstanding editorial assistance. Furthermore, I am immensely thankful to four anonymous reviewers of the book for their valuable critical feedback, which I deeply appreciate.

Throughout the three-year field and archival work in Mewat, I had the privilege of experiencing the remarkable hospitality of numerous individuals who graciously shared their life experiences with me. Among them, I wish to thank Islamuddin Meo and his family in particular for their exceptional support. Without their help, I could not have traversed the vast expanse of Mewat to find research material. My Mewati folk-musician friends also provided valuable insights into the changing cultural practices of the region. Their voices resonate throughout the book, reflecting our meaningful conversations. To prioritize their safety and shield them from potential harm, I have chosen to assign them pseudonyms. I sincerely hope they understand and are not bothered by the alteration of their real names.

I am also grateful for the love and kindness of my family members, particularly my parents, my brother and sister, who have consistently supported my decisions and had full faith in my abilities. Lastly, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my partner, Garima, whose love, intellectual companionship and support have been pivotal in bringing this book to fruition. Her meticulous reading and critical feedback on various drafts have left an indelible mark on every page. Without her constant encouragement, this book may have never come to light. Garima’s family, especially Navneet, too, deserves many thanks for their constant encouragement.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone mentioned earlier and all those whose contributions may have inadvertently been omitted. Their support, mentorship and kindness have played an indispensable role in the making of this book.