Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to Dr. E.V. Ramasamy, Director, School of Environmental Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University for providing me the opportunity to work under his guidance for this Ph. D. dissertation. His valuable guidance and constant encouragement have been of great value for me. His ideas and constructive criticism have provided a good basis for the present thesis. Dear sir, I sincerely thank you for the trust and confidence you have shown to me throughout my study period.

With his tremendous enthusiasm towards tropical forest ecology, Dr. S. Narendra Prasad, Head and Senior Principal Scientist, Division of Landscape Ecology, SACON has been a constant source of inspiration throughout my Ph. D career. He is the ‘master brain’ of this research and his knowledge and vision helped me to achieve the target of this research. It has been a privilege to work with and learn from him over the past four years. His guidance and expertise was highly beneficial for the study right from the inception to final stage. Dear sir, words are not enough to express my gratitude and indebtedness to you.

I would like to place my admiration and gratitude towards my beloved sir Late Dr. R. Satheesh who kindled my interest in tropical forestry. Upto his sudden demise he was always there for to guide and promote me with his ideas and viewpoints. He played a major role in developing my research aptitude and acted as a ‘role model’ for me in many ways. Dear sir, whenever I achieve something professionally I feel always to run towards you and see how your eyes are glowing for that.

I wholeheartedly thank Prof. A. P. Thomas, Former Dean and Director, School of Environmental Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University for standing firm in his support to my research aspirations. His constant encouragement and timely advices and moreover the understanding he has shown to me throughout the study period kept me going forward.

My research career was highly stimulated by Dr. Lalitha Vijayan, Head and Principal Scientist, Division of Conservation Biology, SACON. I express my sincere thanks to her for spending her valuable time in advising me all through the thesis work. I am deeply grateful to
Dr. V.S. Vijayan, Former Director, SACON whose ideas and proficiency in the subject was extremely useful for me to start the thesis in the right way.

I am very much thankful to Dr. P. Vijayakumaran Nair, Scientist-E2, Forest Management Information and GIS, Kerala Forest Research Institute for the useful discussions and support provided for the study.

Thanks are due to Dr. P. Balasubramanian, Senior scientist, SACON for directing me in field work and plant taxonomy. I also take this opportunity to thank all scientists of SACON who have shown keen interest to my study. The thesis work was highly benefited with the useful comments of different people from various institutes. I recognize the contribution of Dr. P. Venu, Joint Director, BSI, Hyderabad; Dr. C. Sudhakar Reddy, Scientist D, NRSC, Hyderabad and Dr. K.S. Rajan, Professor, IIIT, Hyderabad for the support provided.

The major financial support for this study was from KSCSTE research fellowship by Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, Government of Kerala which is greatly acknowledged. Thanks are also due to Dr. Mohan Das, Principal Scientific Officer, Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment. Forest departments of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are acknowledged for allowing me to do the field work. I express my sincere gratitude to Dr. V. K. Uniyal, Project Director, Attapady Hills Development Society for the necessary discussions for the study. I am thankful to Mr. P. Radhakrishnan, Team leader, AHADS for extending all the possible help.

I can not forget the enthusiasm shown by Dr. Murugan, Scientist, BSI for helping me with plant taxonomy. I honestly thank Dr. Ramachandra Prasad, Faculty, IIIT, for the keen interest shown for the study. I wish to express my warm and sincere thanks to Dr. Liza Comita, Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior, University of Minnesota, U.S.A for commenting on the regeneration data. I would like to record my sincere thanks to Dr. Robert John, Fellow, Asoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment for extending the support for the study. Timely help provided by Dr. Bijoy Thomas, Fellow, Asoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment is duly acknowledged. I always cherished in the deep concern and constant encouragement showered to me by Dr. B. Ajaykumar, Assistant Geologist, Department of Mining and Geology. Special thanks for Dr. Annie Mathai, and Dr. A. A. Mohammed Hatha, Faculty members, School of Environmental Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University for the care and encouragement shown to me. I wish to thank
Dr. M.S. Francis, Reader, Department of Botany, S. H. College, Kochi for planting the seeds of research into my brain. He was in fact introduced me into the colorful world of plants. All the teachers and non-teaching staff of SES are duly acknowledged for their support, encouragement and inspiration.

Researchers of SACON made my stay at SACON pleasant and wonderful. I thank all of them (I am not listing out everyone since it is long) for the assistance they have provided me during the research period. I also thank the help provided by Mr. Manoharan, Librarian of SACON for the support provided in the library.

I remember all the good friends of SES for enriching my life with good memories. All the fun-filled moments which I had with you is very special to me in which I rejoice in my rest life. I thank each one of you for being what you are to me. I remember the efforts taken by Dr. Mahesh Mohan, Mr. Sylas V.P., Mr. Rakesh P. S., Mr. Shylesh Chandran and Mr. Jayasoroonan K. K., for smooth running of the study. I am thankful to Mr. Prasanth Narayan and Ms. Ranjini J for the sweet companionship provided in the field. Special thanks to Mr. Salahudin, Librarian, SES for the assistance provided in the library.

I wish to thank Mr. Murugavel for assisting in the field. He was so patient and took me into the remote corners of forest. Additionally, I thank all the peoples of Anaikatty and Attapady for co-operating with me for the surveys and sharing their knowledge with me.

I also wish to place a record of appreciation for the great help provided by Dr. Rajeev Raghavan, Conservation Research Group, St. Albert’s College for patiently going through the earlier draft of the thesis. My heartfelt thanks to Mr. Josin C. Tharian for the technical support provided. I further extend my gratefulness to all members of Conservation Research Group for the support rendered during the study period. Special mention to Ms. Ambily and Ms. Simmy Solomon for their sweet company.

I wish to record my utmost feeling of gratitude towards the family members of Kannaril and Kodakkattu for the wonderful feeling of understanding and togetherness. I should thank specially to Ammu for all the love, care and trust shown to me throughout my life. She was my companion in my childhood nature explorations. I remember the moments we spend together to explore the ‘sacred groves’ in and around my tharavadu. From 2005 onwards, all
the joys in my life is named as **Rishikesh**. The sweet telephonic conversations with him were totally refreshing and made me to go ahead.

With deep sense of devotion I thank my parents for everything they are to me. It was my mother who taught me to appreciate mother nature. Infact she was so happily planted varieties of plants into our garden which played a major role to take up plant studies seriously. The enthusiasm she showed for my ‘silly research’ in home was tremendous. From there I developed a keen interest towards the plant science. Upto her shocking demise she was always to support whatever I did. To speak about **Achan**, he gave me all freedom to choose whatever I feel right. I thank him deeply for the support and care showed throughout the study period. In this walk, the immense support and co-operation provided by my little brother was astonishing. This work is a dedication to you all …my family.

My heartfelt thanks are due to my in–laws family Mamkunnel for the support and encouragement provided.

Words fall short to express my feeling towards my beloved husband **Dr. Shijo Joseph** who was always walked with me right from the inception of this study to the final stage. It was he, who empowered me to undertake such risky field works in forest. A short talk with him always made me confident to achieve any target. He was the real man behind the successful completion of this thesis. Dear, I thank you for the unbounded love, endurance, sacrifice and understanding shown by you. All my efforts are for you ….

Many people from different institutions played a key role in completing this thesis work. I acknowledge all those who helped me in various ways for the successful completion of this work.

Anitha. K