## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This investigation was carried out under the joint supervision of Prof.C.A. Ninan, M.Sc., Ph.D., D.D., Professor of Generatics and Plant Breeding & Head, Department of Botany and Dr.P.I. Kuriachan, M.Sc., Ph.D., Professor of Botany, University of Kerela, Trivandrum. I wish to express my deep indebtedness to them for suggesting this problem, for valuable guidance and encouragement throughout the course of this work and for helpful suggestions and advice in the preparation of the thesis. I am also especially grateful to Dr.C.A. Minan, Head of the Department for kindly providing necessary facilities to carry out the present investigation.

I am thankful to Dr.P. Gopinathan Nair, M.Sc., Ph.D., Reader in Botany in this department for critical reading of the manuscript of Part II of this thesis. I acknowledge my sincere thanks to Dr.Jacob Sundara Raja, Reader in Statistics and Sri.K. Kalyanaraman of the Department of Statistics for advice in statistical analysis of the data.

I also wish to acknowledge the assistance in photographic work received from Sri.A.Krishnan Kutty Nair and Sri.M. Krishna Sait, Artist Photographers of the Department of Botany. I am also grateful to the Director, Botanical Survey of India, Coimbatomefor help in the verification of species determinations of the materials used in this study. My thanks are due to all the teachers and collegues in the department who have contributed to the successful completion of this work.

I am also grateful to the University of Kerala and the CSIR for the award of Research Fellowships which enabled me to carry out this investigation.