ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is with great pleasure that I express my deep and heartfelt sense of gratitude to Dr. (Sr.) Avita—my supervising teacher—for suggesting this topic, her constant guidance, supervision, encouragement, parental care and affection during the course of this study, but for which this piece of work would not have materialized. I owe an intense gratitude to our dear principal, Rev. Sr. Emeline and to the management of St. Teresa's College for providing all the facilities to carry out this work.

I am very much indebted to Dr. (Sr.) Merlee Teresa for her valuable suggestions and loving encouragement. My grateful thanks are also due to Prof. K.K Parvathi (Rtd.), Prof. Thangom Mathew (Rtd.), Rev. Sr. Tessa and all my beloved teachers of the department.

The timely help extended to me by Dr. D.I Arockiasamy, Department of Botany, St. Joseph's College, Trichy is remembered gratefully. I am also thankful to Dr. B. Kulandaivelu, School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University for the SEM photographs and Dr. Ajith, Centre for Research and Consultancy, Ernakulam, for the statistical analysis.

I gratefully acknowledge the library facilities provided by the authorities of CMFRI, Cochin; RRII, Kottayam; University of Kerala, Trivandrum; St. Joseph's College, Trichy and Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai.
I wish to record my deep sense of thanks to Miss. Liza Jacob, for her help and encouragement during the various stages of this work. I am also thankful to all my friends and colleagues particularly to Mrs. Lizzy Mathew, Mrs. Beena Suresh, Mrs. Romily Mendez, Dr. Annie Deleela, C.J, Dr. Thara K. Simon and Dr. Sheela D. for their multifarious help. The co-operation rendered by all the non-teaching staff of our department is gratefully remembered.

I am very much thankful to Mr. Biju V. George and all the staff members of Bics Computer Centre, Ernakulam for neatly typing the thesis.

The JRF awarded to me by Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam is gratefully acknowledged.

Above all, what I owe to my parents, brothers and sisters is beyond the scope of any word.

VICTORIA P.K.