ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and the help of several individuals who in one way or another contributed and extended their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study. It is a pleasure to convey my gratitude to them all in my humble acknowledgement.

First and foremost, I express my utmost gratitude towards my guide Prof. B. P. Kapadnis for their invaluable suggestions, support and encouragement throughout my Ph. D. work. His valuable guidance has made me to understand the meaning of research. I sincerely thank to my co-guide Dr. V. R. Gunale for his constant encouragement throughout this research work.

I would like to thank Dr. N. S. Rajurkar, Head, Department of Environmental Science, University of Pune for providing me the laboratory facilities and help throughout the progress of the work. I am also thankful to faculty members, Dr. R. L. Deopurkar, Dr. B. A. Chopade, Dr. Karishma Pardeshi, Mr. Ashok Bankar, and Dr. Shweta Sonawane, Department of Microbiology, University of Pune, Pune.

I am indebted to the UGC (University Grant Commission, Delhi) for providing me the Ph. D. fellowship for college teachers under Faculty Improvement Program.

I express my gratefulness towards Dr. R. M. Misal, Principal and Mrs. Neha Patil, Head, Department of Microbiology, Annasaheb Magar Mahavidyalaya, Hadapsar, Pune for their constant support and inspiration.

I sincerely acknowledge Dr. P. K. Dhakephalkar for his crucial contribution in 16S rDNA gene sequencing of the bacterial cultures. I am also thankful to Ms. Anupama Engineer for the same.

This is a great opportunity to specially thank Dr. Ramesh Hapase, Vasantdada Sugar Institute, Pune for providing me different varieties of sugarcane samples throughout my research work. I am also grateful to Dr. A. S. Patil for his valuable advice and encouragement.

Many thanks go in particular to Dr. Abhay Ekbote and Mr. Prashant, Doctors Laboratory, Pune for helping in High Performance Liquid Chromatography and Gas
Chromatography analysis. I am also thankful to Mr. Kalbhor, Drakshya Bagayatdar Sanghya, Pune for doing chemical analysis of plant and soil samples during this research work. My sincere thanks go to Dr. Neelu Nawani, Dr. Vrushali Kanavade, Dr. Dhara Sachdev and Mr. Kedar for valuable experimental help and co-operation. My sincere thanks also go to Dr. Arti Dhepe, IBB, University of Pune, Pune and Dr. Nilambika, R. G. Institute of Information Technology and Biotechnology, Bharati Vidhyapith, Pune for their experimental assistance in plant tissue culture techniques.

I am very thankful to Dr. Somkanwar and Dr. Taware, National Research Institute for Grapes, Pune; Mr. Sandeep Jadhav, National Institute of Virology, Pune and Mrs. Anupama Khot for their help in statistical analysis of this research data.

In my daily work, I have been blessed with a cheerful team of my colleagues and friends at Annasaheb Magar Mahavidyalaya, Hadapsar, Pune. I would like to acknowledge them for being a constant support: Mr. Mangesh Deshapande, Mrs. Hemlata Sonawane, Amita, Shubhangi, Pallavi, Meghmala and Shubhangi K.

Words fail me to express my deepest appreciation to Sangeeta S, Milind G, Divya P, Aparna, Smita, Pranali, Saba and Manisha for being great friends, a constant source of support and inspiration.

My earnest thanks go to the administrative staff from Department of Microbiology of both, University of Pune, Pune and Annasaheb Magar Mahavidyalaya, Hadapsar, Pune.

I am grateful to University of Pune, Pune for admitting me for the Ph. D. course.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my husband, cute son, parents and relatives for their unending moral support, encouragement and prayers. Without their support this work would not have been possible.

Finally, I thank everybody who was important to the successful realization of this thesis as well as expressing my apology that I could not mention personally one by one.

Nita B. Patil