ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is my pride and privilege to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. K. UDAIYAN, Professor and Head (Retd.), Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore for his erudite guidance, precious counsel, promptness, steadfast encouragement, focusing criticism, perusal preparation of the manuscript and patience evinced in all the sphere of my research work. It is really my good fortune to have been able to work under his supervision.

I am very grateful to SPICES BOARD (GOVT. OF INDIA) for the grant of study leave for my Ph.D., programme.

It is my pleasure to extend my thanks to Dr. S. MANIAN, Professor and Head, Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, for his support, encouragement and kind cooperation during the course study.

I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. V. NARMATHA BAI and Dr. V.R.K. REDDY, Professors, Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, for their encouragement during the course of the study.

I wish to thank Dr. T. MUTHUKUMAR, Guest Lecturer, Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, for his help in the preparation of the thesis.

I am grateful to Dr. V. RAJESH KANNAN, Lecturer, Department of Microbiology, Bharathidasan University, Trichy, who deserves special thanks for his unstinting help, moral support rendered at the critical moments during my study and perusal preparation of the manuscript.

I wish to thank Dr. J. THOMAS, Director (R), Dr. JOSEPH THOMAS, Sr. Scientist and Head, Division of Plant Pathology, Indian Cardamom Research Institute (Spices Board), Myladumpara, Kerala, Mr. K. SRINIVASAN [Scientist-in-charge, Retd.], Dr. B. GOPAKUMAR, Scientist-in-charge, Dr. G. ANAND, Scientist (Crop Botany), Dr. S. MOHAN, Jr. Technical Assistant, ICRI, Regional Research station, Thadiankudisai, Kodaikanal, for their assistance in various occasions and encouragement.
I wish to thank Dr. S. SUNDAR SINGH, Registrar, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, for his encouragements and help in plant and soil nutrient analysis and Dr. R.KANNAN, Assistant Professor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, for his valuable help in correction and editing the thesis. I wish to thank Dr. MURUGAN, Reader in Zoology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore for his support and encouragement during the course of study.

I am highly indebted to my friends Dr. P. GURUMOORTHI, Guest Lecturer, Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Dr. K. M. ARAVINTHAN and Dr. ARUNKUMAR ARUMUGAM, Lecturers in Biotechnology, NGM College, Pollachi, Mr. M. JEGADESAN, Scientist, Coffee Board, Thandikudi, Dr. P. N. DAMODARAN, Mr. SURIYANARAYANAN and Mr. JAYAKUMAR, Department of Environmental Sciences, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Mr. V. N. MUTHARAIAN, Doctoral Scholar, Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Mr. K.M.RAMKUMAR, Doctoral Scholar, Department of Biotechnology, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Mr. K. SATHIYASEELAN, Southern Railway, Trichy, Mr. P. MURUGESAN & FAMILY, Nilakottai, Mr. T. VELRAJ, A.G.M (Retd.) RBI, Chennai, Mr. T. JAYARAJ, Mr. R. APPADURAI, Mr. R. RAVICHANDRAN, and Mr. A. JOSEPH, IOB, Dindigul whose interest, affection, indelible, kind assistance and enthusiasm during my academic carrier kept me going with the research work until it had taken final shape.

I am indebted to Mrs. K. KALYANI, Dr. T. SEKAR and Mrs. A. NOORJAHAN Department of Botany, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, for their technical assistance during the course of the study.

Words seems to be inadequate to express my sense of gratitude surging in me towards my most affectionate and beloved wife, parents and other family members for their unbounded affection, encouragement and enthusiastic support throughout the course of my study.

K. DHANAPAL