

I am extremely grateful to Dr. P. Ilangovan, Professor and Head, Department of Environmental Remote Sensing and Cartography, Dr. K. Lakshmi (Retd) Professor, Department of Geography, Dr. A. Shanthakumari, Professor, Department of Geography Dr. I. K. Manonmani, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography for their ingenious suggestions and vivid support in carrying out my research.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all faculty members, teaching and non-teaching staff in the department of Geography, Madurai Kamaraj University for the help provided to carry out my research work in space and time.

I would like to render my special thanks to Mr. T. M. Vamana Rao,(Retd) Research Assistant, Department of Economics and Statistics, Civil Station, Palakkad for the help provided in the collection of data to carry out my research work and Mr. M. T. Thouseef, GIS Assistant, Department of Town Planning, Civil Station, Palakkad and Mr. N. Sudhagar, Research Scholar, Dept. of Geography, Madurai Kamaraj University for the timely help in the preparation of maps.

On a personal note, I must place on record the help and support given to me by my family, especially my husband Dr. P. K. Vijayan and my children Mrs. Roshni Sarin and Mr. Rohit Vijayan for putting up with my absence and understandingly never ending excuses to be away on research.

I record my heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Kamini Parthasarathy and her family members for the stay and hospitality at Madurai.

At the outset I am reminded of the saying “A person who is not grateful to his fellow cannot be grateful to GOD.” I therefore take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all those people who have helped immensely in the successful completion of my research work.

Last, but not least I fervently record my heart full thanks to the **ALMIGHTY**, who showers blessings on me now and always.

(P.Lilly Varghese)

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL BASE AND METHODOLOGY