ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincere gratitude towards my supervisor, Dr. Arun Kumar Attri, who provided the much needed suggestions, intellectual stimulation and encouragement while curbing and improving my shortcomings simultaneously. I appreciate his thorough and conscientious efforts in guiding me throughout the course of my Ph.D work.

I am grateful to the Dean (SES), Prof. D. K. Banerjee, for readily extending to me the adequate research facilities in the school.

Thanks are also due to my senior lab-mates, Dr. Bhaveshjee, Dr. Bhuvaneswari and Dr. Anita for their friendly and scholarly advice from time to time. I express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Avinash for always being there for me, and also for helping throughout the sampling and analysis. I also thank Ragini for her support all through.

I am thankful to Jeetendra, Neeraj, Alabh, Pancham and Sujit who had helped me immensely during the process of sampling. I must specially thank Amar for lending a helping hand during the sampling and analysis.

Alok K Das extended his valuable help in shaping and improving the entire script. I am also thankful to Ranjay, Mahesh and Bhavana for their sincerity in proof reading and editing the manuscript.

The most important task while acknowledging various people for their ingenuous help and affection is to recognise the importance of friendship. My friends who stood by me throughout my work are Dileep, Vinit, Brajendra, Sanjeev, Shakti, Arun, Jeetendra, Biplab & Maitrayee, Sarita, Navita, Bhaskar, Ajay, Wakeel, Akhilesh, Pranav & Usha, Ajit, Krishna Deo, Nag, Venkat and Abhay Pratap. All of them showed benevolence and good companionship throughout my stay in JNU.
To be able to stand the rigours of the work, homely atmosphere was a must. Mrs. and Mr. Rajnath, Mrs. and Mr. Diwakar and Mrs. and Mr. Panigrahi provided me a home away from home. Their love and affection intensified my zeal and efforts. I thank them all.

Without the help and assistance of Nagendrajeet, I could not have contemplated the completion of this task. His help during sample collection and analysis was invaluable. I am also thankful to Gajendrajeet and Mr. Venkat for the much needed help and support during the research work.

My family has always been a source of unrelenting and undying support, thus enabling me to pursue the career of my choice. They have stood by me throughout my life. My father, Shri. Ram Nandan Verma and elder brother, Shri. Arun Kumar have been the prime source of inspiration all through. My grandmother, Smt. Lekhrani Devi, mother, Smt. Siyamani Devi, bhabhi, Smt. Manju and my sisters Renu and Bindu, although always had complaints for not giving them enough time during the course of this work, made all emotional compromises that were warranted during this long period. My Jijajee, Mr. Prabhat Kumar Singh, has always provided me with unstinting support. My younger brother, Amit, nephew and nieces, Pravin, Priya, Saumya and Shubhra kept my spirits high and my hamstrings in working order. Guriya, Niku and all my cousins kept their faith in my abilities, which motivated me all through. I am also thankful to Santosh and Suman for their love and support. It is the love of them all that has made it happen. How do I repay, even in part, their love and magnanimous support, I am still working on.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the University Grants Commission, in the form of Junior Research Fellowship and Senior Research Fellowship.

Anil Kumar