ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was carried out in the Department of Botany, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram under the supervision and guidance of Dr. P. Gopalakrishna Pillai, Reader (Rtd). I express my deep sense of gratitude and indebtedness to him for suggesting this topic and for his valuable guidance and encouragement throughout the course of this work and also for the critical suggestions in the preparation of this thesis.

I am grateful to Prof. K. Kalyanaraman, Department of Statistics, University of Kerala for his valuable help in the statistical analysis of the research data.

I record my sincere thanks to Prof. G.M. Nair, former Head and Prof. N. Omana Kumari, the present Head of the Department of Botany for providing facilities to carry out this work and also for their encouragement.

I acknowledge my sincere gratitude to Prof. P.M. Mathew, former Head of the Department of Botany, University of Kerala, for his valuable advice in the preparation of the thesis.

I am also thankful to Dr. Stephen Joseph, former Research Fellow of the Department for his sincere help in the collection of literature.

I owe my sincere thanks to the various local people who had helped me in collecting the reliable family data from different localities which were not familiar to me.

I am also thankful to the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, for providing its approval for this Ph.D work under the IX Plan Faculty Improvement Programme.

My sincere thanks are also due to M/s. Lakshmi Grafiks, Thuckalay, Kanyakumari District for their technical assistance.

B. VASANTHA KUMARI