ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deep gratitude is to my supervisor, Dr. DL. Venkatesh Babu, Ph.D., Professor & Head, Civil Engineering, ACS College of Engineering, Bengaluru and joint supervisor Dr. R. Venkatasubramani, Ph.D., Professor, Civil Engineering, Dr. Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology, Pollachi. I have been amazingly fortunate to have advisors who gave me freedom to explore on my own and at the same time, the guidance to recover when my steps faltered.

I would like to thank the doctoral committee members, Dr. SRR. Senthil Kumar, Ph.D., Principal, Agni College of Technology, Chennai and Dr. P. Eswaramoorthi, Ph.D., Professor, Kumaraguru College of Technology, Coimbatore for their encouragement and insightful comments.

I am indebted to thank the respected Chairman Dr. M. Manickam, M.Sc., M.B.A., and respected Secretary Prof. C. Ramaswamy, M.E., F.I.V. and Principal Dr. M. Ramakrishnan, Ph.D, Dr. Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology, Pollachi for extending all help to carry out this experimental work.

I am grateful to Dr. Ranga Palaniswamy, Ph.D., P.E., PMP., FASCE., and Dr. G. Jaisankar, Ph.D., for holding me to a high research standard and thus teaching me how to do research. I am very much thankful to my colleagues and supporting staff members for extending their kind and timely help towards the successful completion of this thesis.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the love and patience of my parents and my family. They have been a constant source of love, concern, support and strength all these years.

ELANGOVAN R