Coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera* Linn.) is one of the valuable gifts of nature to mankind and is a reverently honoured crop which pervades all spheres of human life. It is considered as the tree of life and is eulogized as *Kalpavriksha*, the all giving tree or the Tree of Heaven. Coconut fruit is considered as *LakshmiPhal*, the Fruit of wealth. It is unique among all horticultural crops as a source of food, drink, shelter, fibre, medicine and a variety of raw materials for industrial exploitation. The crop is gaining world wide acceptance as a major source of dietary energy and a means of livelihood security to millions.

The maximum area under coconut in India is in Kerala followed by Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh which together contribute 90 per cent of the total area and production in the country. The growing demand for coconut and coconut products in the entire country irrespective of its localized cultivation has resulted in the spreading of the crop across the country and now coconut is cultivated in most of the states and Union Territories.

It has been widely accepted that farmer’s perception of coconut varieties provides the basis for conserving the bio-diversity. Similarly farmers are the best informed of the varietal characteristics and a few ecotypes with superior characteristics grown in Kerala are highly valued by them. It was, therefore, felt imperative to explore the indigenous knowledge on such ecotypes/ cultivars located in different agro-climatic regions and hence this study was taken with specific objectives.

The study and its results are arranged in this thesis under six chapters – Introduction, Materials and methods, Observations, Discussions, Summary and Conclusion and References. The conclusions drawn from this study are valid for further crop improvement studies of coconut. Researchers can focus their attention on coconut breeding programme involving these ecotypes, which have not yet been subjected to similar studies. I am thankful to one and all who directly or indirectly helped me in selecting this topic of immense relevance and timely completion of the study.

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