ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I offer my Pranamam at the feet of God Almighty who has given me the opportunity to take up this research work and for all the blessings showered upon me throughout this programme.

I make this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude and indebtedness to my Supervising Teachers, Dr. M. G. Kumaran, Joint Director, Rubber Board, and Dr. Sabu Thomas, Reader, School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for kindly suggesting the topic of my research work and for their valuable comments, perpetual inspiration and encouragement throughout my research work.

I acknowledge with thanks the valuable help extended to me by Dr. M. R. Sethuraj, former Director, Rubber Research Institute of India, for permitting me to utilise the library and laboratory facilities of the institute. I also express my gratitude to Dr. N. M. Mathew, Director, Rubber Research Institute of India, for the valuable instructions and help given to me at various stages of this work. I am extremely thankful to Dr. V. N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice-Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi University and former Director, School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for his continued support and encouragement throughout this work. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my respected teacher, Dr. M. Padmanabhan, Reader-in-Charge, School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for his encouragement and inspiration throughout this work.

I am indebted to Dr. Zachariah Oommen, Lecturer, CMS College, Kottayam, for his valuable suggestions and help throughout my research work. I am expressing my gratitude to my friends, Dr. Alex T. Koshy, Chief R & D Chemist, Park-Ohio, USA, and to Dr. Siby Varghese, Senior Scientist, Rubber Research Institute of India, for their continued inspiration and deep hearted support especially during the earlier stages of this work.

I am expressing my sincere thanks from the depth of my heart to each and everyone of my loving friends in the Polymer Technology Laboratory, School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, for their wholehearted support and encouragement for the successful completion of this thesis.

A special word of thanks to Ms. Snoopy George, Ms. V. G. Geethamma, Ms. Ginu Abraham, Mr. Sony C. George, and Dr. G. Unnikrishnan, for the valuable criticisms, suggestions and help during the preparation of this manuscript.
My sincere thanks are due to the staff at the various departments both at Rubber Research Institute of India and School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for their immense co-operation throughout this work. I would like to mention a few persons specially in this contest, Dr. Vinod Thomas, Dr. Sankari Ammal, Scientists, Botany Division, and Dr. Baby Kuriakose, Mrs. Premalatha C. K., Mr. Benny K. George and Mrs. Reethamma George, RCPT Division, Rubber Research Institute of India, for their sincere help for the completion of my research analysis. I am expressing my sincere gratitude to all the members of the Central Laboratory, Rubber Research Institute of India, for providing me a loving and encouraging atmosphere throughout my work. I am expressing my gratitude the library staff of RRII, for their unselfish help throughout this study. I also express my thanks to all the faculty members and non-teaching staff of School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for their valuable help throughout my Ph.D. programme. A special word of thanks to Mr. Vijayakumar, Artist-Photographer, School of Chemical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for the neat tracings.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. K. A. Jose, Regional Director, School of Technology and Applied Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, for permitting me to complete my research work.

A special word of thanks to my colleagues at School of Technology and Applied Sciences, for their whole hearted support for the completion of this programme.

The help rendered by Dr. K. E. George, Dr. Rani George, Dr. Philip M. Kurian, Department of Polymer Science and Rubber Technology, Cochin University, is gratefully acknowledged for providing me the experimental facilities to carry out the rheological studies in their laboratory.

I am remembering with gratitude the financial assistance which I received from Mahatma Gandhi University, and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Delhi.

I express my sincere thanks to Mr. Benny George, Mr. M. N. Anil Kumar and other members of Copy Write, Ettumanoor, for the effort they have taken in the preparation of this manuscript.

A special word of thanks to Dr. Anne George, W/o Dr. Sabu Thomas, for the silent help given to me in an indirect sense.

I am very much indebted to my Father, Mother and Brother, for their moral support and unselfish encouragement throughout my research programme and I am expressing my gratitude with love and affection.

Asaleatha R.