ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sir Isaac Newton once wrote, “If I have seen further than other men, it is because I have stood on the backs of giants.” Like Newton, my success if any is there, has more to do with the people who have helped me along the way than any individual effort I could have made on my own. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to several people for their assistance, encouragement and support in the development of this thesis. I am quite certain that without the help of all these people during the past years, this work would never have come together as it is now. This really was a collective effort right from the beginning.

I was fortunate to have Dr. T. Selvin Jebaraj Norman as the doctoral committee chairman and research supervisor. His guidance and encouragement were instrumental to the completion of this work. I am grateful to him. I am thankful to my Joint Supervisor Dr. H. Samuel Thavaraj, who guided me through the every phase in this study with patience and expertise. His critical eye combined with his encouraging spirit helped me to put together something significant that I could not have done without him. I had also learned a lot from my doctoral committee members, especially the external expert, Dr. B. Anbazhagan whose advice helped me to improve the quality of my work.

I would also like to remember my father late P.V. Pothen, who instilled in me, from a very early age, an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and the trust to be who I wanted to be, even as I still search for who and what that may eventually be.
He inspired me to take calculated risks whenever needed and to learn from them. He always demanded and showed me how to be ethical, respectful and trustworthy. My thanks thus go to my father and wonderful mother with whom I would not be here today, in every sense of my life experiences.

A very special thanks must go to all my close relatives, especially my father-in-law and mother-in-law “At one time or another they all have offered words of encouragement and have indicated a real interest in what was going on in my pursuit of this thesis”.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis, with love, to my wife and soul mate Jyothi and my children, Chrislin, Carolin and Christo, who endured and stood by me during every step of this work. Their patience, encouragement and support will always provide me with the strength and courage to achieve more. I hope my work through this process will serve as a model, demonstrating resilience and determination for which they too, can consider to pursue their future goals.

Most of all, I thank the almighty creator for my presence in this physical realm and giving me strength, hope and mastery in all my endeavours. I do recognise the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent grace in every phase of my pursuit for excellence.

Gandhigram

08 January 2018

Reney P. Varghese