ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heart overflows with deep gratitude to the Almighty for all the blessings and immense grace that sustained on me to complete this work successfully.

I am deeply indebted to Rev. Dr. M.M. Mathew, supervisor and research guide, Department of Botany, St. Thomas college, Palai for his unique supervision of the work, sustained quality guidance, incredible patience, reassuring faith, copious inspiring comments and constructive criticism at different phases of this study since its inception. I am deeply touched by the painstaking devotion evinced by him during the course of investigations. Most sincerely, I thank him for being the guiding spirit behind this endeavour.

I am extremely beholden to Dr. K.K Jose, Principal, St. Thomas College, Palai for his valuable advice and constant support. I also extend my sincere thanks to Rev. Dr. Mathew John K., former Principal, St. Thomas College, Palai for allowing me to study in this prestigious institution.

I take this opportunity to place on record my gratitude to Dr. Jomy Augustine, Head of the Department of Botany, St. Thomas College, Palai for his timely help and valuable efforts for the taxonomic identification of the selected plants and also for providing essential facilities needed for this work. I owe my sincere gratitude to the faculty, staff and all the Research Scholars of Botany department. I gratefully acknowledge Dr. Prakash Kumar B, former head of the Dept. of Biotechnology and Applied Microbiology, St. Thomas College Palai and his colleagues for their support and help given to me. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Hashim, Senior Scientist, Kottackal Aryavydhyasala, Malappuram for the interpretation of the spectroscopic data.

My heartfelt thanks to the librarians and staff of St.Thomas College Library, M.G University Library, Bharathiar University Library, Bharathidasan University Library, Calicut University Library etc. who generously extended their helping hands. With immense gratitude I remember all the staff of Computer Centre, St.Thomas College, Palai for their kind help.

Personal debts are the hardest to acknowledge in formal terms. I remember with unstinting affection and gratitude my provincial superior Rev. Mother Pushpa
CMC, all my sisters in the Congregation of Mother of Carmel, dear ones and my family members for their prayerful support, loving care and inspirations which stood with me throughout the entire work. I remember in a special way Dr. Sr. Alice Thomas who always showed great interest in my research work and helped me in all the statistical analysis needed in this investigation.

I am much obliged to all the staff of Omega DTP Centre, Pala for the type settings and binding of the thesis.

Sindhu K.K.