Completing my PhD degree was probably the most challenging activity of my life till date. The journey was long and arduous one. It has been a great privilege to spend several years in the Department of Physics, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and its members will always remain dear to me. I owe my gratitude to all those people who have made this thesis possible and because of whom my research experience has been one that I will cherish forever.

My deepest gratitude is to my supervisor, Dr. Surinder Singh, whose positive attitude and encouragement were crucial towards the completion of this thesis. I have been amazingly fortunate to have an advisor like him who gave me the freedom to explore on my own and at the same time the guidance to recover when my steps faltered. He patiently provided the vision, support and advice necessary for me to proceed through the entire course of research work, I am indebted to him for his unflagging encouragement and giving me this opportunity to fulfill my long cherished desire to pursue a doctoral degree.

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my co-supervisor Dr. O.P. Pandey, who has been always there to listen to me and give advice. I am deeply grateful to him for the long discussions that helped me sort out the technical details of my work. His insightful comments and constructive criticisms at different stages of my research were thought-provoking which helped me to focus and enrich my ideas. I am also thankful to him for carefully reading and commenting on countless revisions of this thesis.

I would like to acknowledge the financial, academic and technical support provided by Inter University Accelerator Centre (IUAC), New Delhi to carry out this research work. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Sandeep Chopra for his unconditional support and help during the stay and using beam time at IUAC, New Delhi. I would like to acknowledge Dr. S.P. Lochab, my collaborator in IUAC, New Delhi for providing the congenial working environment and helping during the use of gamma irradiation facility. Thanks are also due to Dr. Fouran Singh, my second collaborator for healthy discussions and assistance during availing the beam time utilization facility.

I appreciate the efforts and endless support offered by Dr. Kabiraj and Mr. Abhilash, Target Lab, IUAC, New Delhi during the thin film preparation. I wish to extend
my special thanks to the Pelletron group at IUAC for providing stable beam during the experiments, without which this experimental work could not have taken the present shape.

I also thank Dr. Kulvir Singh, Thapar University, Patiala for sharing his knowledge and providing guidance in deciding and preparing the sample compositions. I convey my sincere thanks to Dr. Lakhwant Singh and Dr. D.P. Singh, Department of Physics, GNDU, Amritsar for allowing me to use the experimental facilities in their labs. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Shyam Kumar and Dr Sanjeev Aggarwal, Department of Physics, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra for generously extending their help in carrying out the spectroscopic measurements. I humbly thank Prof. Neil C. Hyatt, University of Sheffield, UK, for providing me the research papers whenever required.

I appreciate the guidance and useful suggestions provided by Dr. Amanpreet Kaur Sandhu, Lyallpur Khalsa College, Jallandhar at so many times, on whose footsteps I started my research work. I am grateful to Dr. Gurinderpal Singh, SSIET, Patti for consistently extending his research expertise and providing valuable advice during the sample preparation. He also patiently extended help in carrying out the spectroscopic studies of numerous samples. I would acknowledge Ms. Nupur Saxena for affectionately rendering help during the utilization of beam time.

I have been fortunate to come across many good friends, without whom life would have been bleak. Especially, I would like to thank my friend, Parvinder with whom I have been associated from last thirteen years. I greatly value my friendship with her and deeply appreciate the help she offered me during all these years. I thank Jaskiran, Harman, Manpreet and Sunil, who have been great friends and colleagues and were always willing to help me. Many thanks to Ms Kamal, Mr Vishal Kumar, Ms Gurbinder and Ms Samita for lending their full support, cooperation and for providing homely atmosphere during my stay at Thapar University, Patiala. I would like to thank Mr. Santokh Singh for his constant support and motivation throughout this research work. Thanks are also due to my cousin, Avi who gave me a helping hand at many occasions whole heartedly.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the love and patience of my family. My parents, has been a constant source of love, concern, support and strength all these years. Their love provided me inspiration and was my driving force. I owe them everything. I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to my father, because of whom I chose Physics as my career. He has given me his unequivocal support throughout, as always, for which my mere expression of thanks likewise does not suffice. This thesis is a
dedication to my mother, who has been a source of encouragement and inspiration to me and supported me in every possible way to see the completion of this work. A very special thanks to her for nurturing me through the months of writing and also for the myriad of ways in which, throughout my life, she has actively supported me in my determination to find and realize my potential. Not only me, she also took care of my newly born daughter, while I was busy writing my thesis. Words can never express the deepest gratitude I have for her. I admire her for the person she is and serving as a role model to me. I feel greatly blessed to have a mother like her. This one is for you!!

The second best outcome (first being a PhD degree) from these past four years is finding my best friend, soul-mate and husband, Parwinder Singh. He has been a true and great supporter and has unconditionally loved me during the tough and trying periods of this research work. He has been non-judgmental of me and instrumental in instilling confidence. He helped me in each and every step towards the completion of this thesis, may it be typing, formatting, proof reading of the text and the cumbersome reference job. I deeply appreciate his patience and the freedom he provided that positively affected this thesis. Thanks for being there for me always.

Last but not the least I would like to thank my sweet, cute five month old daughter, Soina, who enlightened my life and kept sleeping during the day giving me ample time to finish this thesis. Cuddles to her!!!

Above all, I owe it all to the Almighty for granting me the wisdom, health and strength to undertake this research task and enabling me to its completion.

(Ravneet Kaur)