This doctoral thesis has been a dream of mine, which would not have seen fruition without the help and support of numerous kind people around me.

To begin with, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my guide Dr. A.V. Saramma, Professor, Department of Marine Biology, Microbiology and Biochemistry, CUSAT, who is captivating, honest, and the true embodiment of a mentor. Her invaluable suggestions, constant and sincere encouragement, insightful discussions, critical evaluation and excellent suggestions for improvement have been most helpful in the rough journey that has brought me here. Words fail me in expressing my thankfulness for her unfailing moral support and blessings in all ways, academically and emotionally.

I am also deeply indebted to Dr. A.A. Mohamed Hatha, Head, Department of Marine Biology, Microbiology and Biochemistry, CUSAT, for facilitating the smooth conduct of my research, providing critical and diligent interventions to overcome tricky situations, and above all for the purposeful reassurances and impassioned exhortations given during the course of my work.

This work would not have been possible without the substantial financial support provided in the form of Research Fellowship for the project entitled ‘Monitoring and Surveillance of Harmful Algal Blooms’ from the Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE), Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, Kochi. I express my profound sense of gratitude to Dr. V.N. Sanjeevan, Former Director, CMLRE, for his benevolent support during this period. I also thank Shri. P. Madeswaran, Director, CMLRE, for his support. Technical support for the open-ocean cruises on FORV Sagar Sampada is also acknowledged. Let me take this opportunity to thank the support staff of CMLRE and FORV Sagar Sampada for all the help they have rendered.
I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof. (Dr.) K. Sajan, Dean, Faculty of Marine Sciences, CUSAT, for his earnest support of my work.

I gratefully acknowledge the role of the members of the Doctoral Research Committee, Dr. Rosamma Philip, Prof. Aneykutty Joseph, and Dr. S. Bijoy Nandan, for their periodic review of my work, constructive criticism, wise counsel and encouragement spanning the duration of my research. I solemnly express my sincere thanks to Dr. Babu Philip, Dr. K.J. Joseph, and Dr. C.K. Radhakrishnan (Retired Professors), for their precious words of wisdom.

I owe special thanks to Prof. (Dr.) K.T. Damodaran, former Dean and Director, School of Marine Sciences, CUSAT, for his support and encouraging words.

I would also like to offer my thanks to Dr. Anilkumar Vijayan, Scientist C, CMLRE, for his active support.

This work would not have been enjoyable without the company of my ever-enterprising colleagues, Dr. M.G. Sanilkumar and Mr. K.R. Abhilash. Their cooperation and support is recognized emphatically.

The valuable help provided to me by my seniors Dr. Rejil T., Dr. Harikrishnan E., and Dr. Padmakumar K.B. is also deeply appreciated.

The tireless efforts of Ms. Vijayalakshmy K.C., Mr. Abhijith Muralidharan, Mr. Akhil P. John and Mr. Shyam Kumar S., my colleagues in the research project, have made the research a whole lot easier. I thank them also for bearing with my tantrums during testing times.

I express my gratitude towards Dr. Neil Scolastine Correya, Dr. Prabhakaran M.P., Dr. Mujeeb Rahman, Dr. Nithin Viswambaran, Dr. Johnson Zacharia, Dr. Jayesh P., Dr. Prajith K.K., Mr. Anil Kumar P.R., Mr. Harisankar H.S., Mr. Naveen Sathyam, Mr. Afzal V.V., Mr. Akhil P.S., Mr. Vishnu Prasad J., Mr. Akhilesh Vijay, Mr. Sanu V.F., Mr. Vincent P.D., Mr. Jabir T., Mr. Jayanath Gopi,
Mr. Solly Solomon, Dr. Manjusha K., Dr. Sini P.J., Dr. Swapna P. Antony, Dr. Reema Kuriakose, Ms. Neenamol S., Ms. Lekshmi S., Ms. Jasmin K.A., Ms. Jini Jacob, Ms. Nifty John, Ms. Deepthi Augustine, Ms. Divya P.S., Ms. Neema Job, Ms. Wilsy Wilson, Ms. Deborah Alexander, Ms. Divya T. Babu, Ms. Emilda Rosmine, Ms. Chaithanya E.R., Ms. Sreedevi O.K., Ms. Varsha M.S., Ms. Bhavya K., and numerous others from my laboratory who have contributed, in their own terms, to the successful completion of my work and this thesis.

I thank Mr. Manuel P.J., Librarian, and other staff of the School of Marine Sciences Library, CUSAT, for their valuable cooperation. I am thankful to members of the administrative and supportive staff of the Department of Marine Biology, Microbiology and Biochemistry, CUSAT, for their help and cooperation. I record my gratitude to Mr. Stephen V.K., Mr. Balan V.K., Mr. Abdul Nazar M., Mr. Sajeeven T.K. and Mr. Santhosh S. for their timely help and support.

This journey would be meaningless without the two pillars of my life, my beloved parents Mr. Thomas V.M. and Mrs. Saramma Thomas. I express my deepest love and affection for them and my sister, my brother-in-law and all my family members for everything they have done for me. They have sacrificed a great deal of time, energy and material for me and have constantly stood by me, through thick and thin. Having endured my various emotions, no one understands me better than my family. I shall be eternally grateful to them for believing me and keeping me in their prayers constantly.

Above all, I thank the Almighty God for making my life a blessed one.