ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Having reached this stage of my Ph.D work, it is a pleasant task to express my gratitude to all those who directly or indirectly contributed to my thesis in various ways. First of all I would like to express my sincere thanks to my thesis supervisor Dr. Anand Inbanathan, without whose constant encouragement and support I could not have finished the thesis. He has been of immense support as a real friend, guide, and as an academician who has always provided critical inputs towards my work. His contributions have enabled me to greatly improve the thesis, and to enrich its contents.

I am extremely indebted to Professor P.K. Michael Tharakan who taught me basic lessons of research work. The many discussions and interactions with him have made me capable of undertaking and finishing this work. He has helped in my theoretical understanding and to cross the borders of disciplines to interpret field data. His personal care and love helped me in overcoming several critical situations during the research process.

I record my sincere thanks to Professor R.S. Deshpande, Director of ISEC, and Professor N. Jayaram, former Director of ISEC, for their valuable support to me, to undertake and finish my thesis work. I am also indebted to Mr. K.S. Narayana, the Assistant Registrar (Academic) of ISEC, and the administrative staff of ISEC for their contributions in clearing the administrative procedures. I am grateful to the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), for providing institutional fellowship through ISEC to undertake this PhD work. I am also grateful to my doctoral committee members, Professor D. Rajasekhar, Professor N. Sivanna and Dr. V. Anil Kumar for their critical comments and suggestions to improve on my research and thesis. Long discussions with Dr. Anil Kumar helped me to go ahead on a right track while I was stuck in darkness. The discussions with Professor B.S. Bhargava, who has shown a parental affection to me has given me strength to finish this research work.

It is with a great sense of gratitude that I record my indebtedness to those who have suffered while I was unable to fully undertake certain familial responsibilities, during the course of full time research. I am deeply indebted to my life partner Dhanya, without whose support I would not have been able to complete this work. My
mother and father who have always supported my academic endeavours have provided their whole hearted assistance to finish my PhD thesis.

Many of my friends have provided their help and encouragement in finishing this thesis. I would like to mention some of them. My family friends Binoy Peter and Bishali Goswami helped me to overcome the difficulties that I have gone through in the course of my Ph.D work. The contributions of other friends: Malish. C.M, Chinthu. Mr. Jafar Kizhakethil, Justin George, Benson Thomas, P. Srikanth, Smitha.G, Ashok Chandran and T. Kannan were also invaluable in the embodiment of this thesis. Academicians and activists who were also instrumental and supportive of my Ph.D work are Dr. M.P. Parameswaran, Dr. Jos Chathukulam, Dr. K.N. Ganesh, Dr. Joy Elamon, Professor S.N. Sangita, Dr. K.G. Gayathridevi, Professor Olle Tornquist, and Prof. Ashuthosh Vashney, to all of whom I am truly grateful.

I am indebted to the Presidents, elected representatives and volunteer activists of Kudayathur, Venkitangu and Vallikkunnu GramPanchayats who provided their support to conduct my field study. Iam also grateful to Mr James George, Mr. Thomas, Ms Simi Sreeraj (Kudayathur), Ms Radha, Ms Reena Kumari (Vallikkunnu), Mr. Unnikrishnan and Mr. Peethambaran (Venkitangu), who have all assisted me during my field study. I am thankful to the women NHG members of the three GramPanchayats who fully cooperated with me in the interview process, and all other respondents who patientlyendured the long interviews irrespective of their busy schedules.

My earlier association with the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath (KSSP) contributed immensely in developing my world view and research aptitude. Many eminent personalities within the KSSP were influential in my academic pursuits. I would like to particularly remember the names of Professor E.K. Narayanan, and C.G. Santhakumar who are now no more with us, but who had taught me the value of acquiring scientific knowledge. Iam indebted to the Yuvajana Samithi Pothu Vayana Sala (Public Library) Manalur, my village library that opened a new world of books to me, and that became instrumental in helping me reach up to the level of the PhD. Last, but not the least, I remember my beloved grandmother Parukutty Amma (late) who had cherished an unending love for me, and I dedicate this thesis to her memory.

(RAJESH.K)