Acknowledgements

My deep and endless gratitude is to God for always keeping his grace on me and providing me the strength to accomplish this treatise with positive energy and happiness.

Every mission needs a spirit of dedication and hard work, but more than anything else it needs proper guidance, working atmosphere and mental support. The period associated with the completion of this work has been of creative illuminations, academic and personal challenges, and of help from various sources. Words sometimes cannot express one's innermost feelings regarding people to whom one is beholden.

It has been my great privilege to acknowledge with reverence and gratitude, the keen valuable and ever available guidance rendered to me by my esteemed supervisor Prof. (Dr.) M.I.S. Saggoo, Botany Department, Punjabi University, Patiala. I am at short of words to say about the greatness of this magnanimous personality. It is because of his intellectual guidance, valuable suggestions, constructive criticism, encouragement, inspiration, keen interest, kindness, and positive attitude that helped to shape my perceptions and insights. Moreover being one of his students, I have learned to look at things in a much better way which in the long run will not only help me being professional, but will also enrich my personal life. I also extend my sincere thanks to Mrs. Saggoo for her care and affection.

My heartfelt thanks to my co-supervisor Prof. (Dr.) R.C. Gupta, Head, Department of Botany, Punjabi University, Patiala for his valuable advice, eveready attention and interest in my work and providing necessary laboratory facilities. His incisive and creative suggestions have improved my manuscript. He is a person who clearly exemplifies all the qualities required for leading this department in a beautiful and successful manner.

I am grateful to all the teachers of the Department, for their encouragement and unconditional support. I express my gratitude to Dr. (Mrs.) Arneet Gill for her care, guidance enthusiastic support and eveready help from time to time throughout the tenure of my research work.
I am highly indebted to my beloved parents for their love and affections, constant encouragement and financial assistance. Without their blessing I could never have completed this project. I have no worlds to convey my heartiest thanks to them. I am thankful to Almighty for having such wonderful parents. I am also thankful to my dear sister Kuljot for her love and care.

My thanks are always due towards my husband S. Gagandeep Singh Bal for his love, care, affection and understanding during all the crests and troughs of this time. I am also thankful to the little angel inside me for giving me great feeling of happiness. I am also thankful to my mother-in-law Jasbir Kaur for her love and blessings.

I am thankful to all my labmates, Raman di, Kiran, Loveleen, Davinder, Umer, Navdeep di and Rupinder for their help at work front and friendly care and to my fellow researchers for their ever available help. My thanks are no less due to my friends Pali and Meenu, Jaspreet, Dalvir, Monita, Alka for providing me ever willing help for all the time.

My thanks are also due to laboratory staff of the Department especially Hari Singh ji and Kanti ji. I am also thankful to all the non-teaching staff for their timely assistance during the course. I also extend special word of thanks for the staff of garden and conservatory.

Neat, meticulous and efficient final touch of this manuscript by Mr. Dheeraj Kumar (Universal Photostat, Opp. Punjabi University, Patiala) is thankfully acknowledged.

A research problem of this size and duration could not have been completed without support and encouragement of number of people. It is impossible for me to mention all of the people who, in one way to another, have contributed for the completion of this research work, but they all have my sincerest gratitude.

Ravneet Kaur