Whenever a chapter in one's life comes to an end, an appreciation for what is about to be lost floats up. This thesis could never have been accomplished without the support and enthusiasm of my supervisors Dr. Md. Shafikuddin Mollah, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh and Dr. Ravi Kumar, Inter University Accelerator Centre, New Delhi. I express my deepest sense of gratitude to my supervisors for their decisive guidance, constructive criticism and constant encouragement since the beginning of my research Career. Guidance and support from my supervisor Dr. S. Mollah has been invaluable, much beyond my expressions. His enthusiasm and relentless curiosity about subject has always been an inspiration. During working with him and throughout my PhD period I gained a lot of self-confidence and learned that I can do anything if I set my mind to it.

I have heard so many great things about my co-supervisor, Dr. Ravi Kumar, from the people who have worked with him that I feel whatever I say about him would be at best a repetition of my predecessors. Dr. Ravi Kumar has been a great advisor with his deep insight and knowledge of magnetism and superconductivity, an excellent teacher with his ability to make things clear and understandable, and an honest scientist willing to criticize even the most “obvious” conclusions of our work. Above all, his humble character and attractive personality is what made it a great pleasure to be his student.

I am indebted from the core of my heart to Prof. Md. Zafar, Chairman, and Prof. Muhammed Irfan, Ex-Chairman, Department of Physics, AMU, Aligarh for facilitating me with requirements time to time in different ways. I am also thankful to other professors and teachers of this esteemed department for their useful comments and suggestions. Technical staffs in the Department’s workshop as well as non teaching staff have always been available to help me; I owe a lot to them.

I wish to express my sincere regards to Dr. A. Roy, Director, IUAC, New Delhi for providing me the experimental facilities for this work. My very special thanks goes to Pelletron Group at IUAC for providing specific supports during the irradiation experiments, without which this thesis could not have taken the present shape. It is a great pleasure to extend regards to Dr. D. Kanjilal, Dr. D. K. Avasthi and Dr. Sandeep Chopra for their support. I sincerely thank all the employees of IUAC, specially Mr. Rajesh Kumar and Mr. Suman for their help and co-operation whenever it was required.

I had the luck of joining the group of Dr. Ravi Kumar, when there were five Ph. D students with different areas of expertise in the group: R. J. Chaudhary, Anjana Dogra, M. Wasi Khan, S. K. Sharma and Shalendra Kumar. Each of these fellows (now they are all
Doctors) has helped me in different ways. Particularly Dr. R. J. Chaudhary taught me almost everything I know about pulsed laser depositions and many other things I know, in general. He usually had a simple explanation or a practical solution which saved the day. Dr. Sharma and Dr. Shalendra were always the first guys to go with me whenever a problem was too difficult for me.

Now I should thank the colleagues, N. E. Rajeevan, Prabhjot Singh, Abhinav, Feroz, Ms. Ghazala, Ms. Abida, Aditya, Yogesh, Ms. Devki, Md. Arshad, Jai Prakash, Pappu lal, and Amir who joined the lab either with me or after me, they all have managed to keep the lab interesting for the long hours we spent together. Rajeevan Ji and Prbhjot Ji, always generously spent their time answering my questions, which I had many, in their tight schedules. These fellows have set the standards of critical thought in the laboratory, and a reason for me to look into things deeper than I usually would. They all have been good friends and patient colleagues. Their personality made things much easier and their patience with me kept things going. I wish all the best for their future carrier.

I thank Dr. Pardeep Thakur, Prof. Chae, Prof. Choi and Prof. Brookes at Pohang Light Source KIST, Korea and ESRF, France, for being kind enough in performing all the synchrotron measurements presented in this thesis. In particular I owe a lot to Dr. Thakur, he has saved me from couple of technical mistakes and plotting exercise by sharing his technical expertise of X-ray absorption spectroscopy. I thank Dr. C. P. Safvan and Mr Sugam at IUAC for the Labview programs they wrote for me. I also thank Dr. Alok Banerjee at IUC, Indore for sharing his deep insight of magnetism with me and for letting me have the time I need on the PPMS in the tight schedule of the machine. I am also thankful to Dr. Ajay Gupta (Director, IUC Indore), Dr. V. Ganesan, Dr. D. M. Phase, Dr. V Sathe and Dr. V. R. Reddy at IUC Indore for always extending their helping hands. I thank Prof. R. J. Singh, AMU, Aligarh, for always having an open door for my questions. He always had a simple explanation for the questions which I was not able find an answer for in the papers or in the books.

The best part of Ph. D duration has been all the great people I have spent time with, both on and off the court. My childhood friends Akhilesh, Sudhakar, Shailesh and Manish have been a source of endless friendship. Dr. Sharma, Dr. Hardev, Dr. Shalendra and B. Mohanty have been great friends and buddies at IUAC, and I will always miss their company, going Priya and discussing the novel ideas. B. Mohanty has continually surprised me with his intellect (beyond just science) and sharp personal observations. Dr. Shakeb Ahmad, a great friend and senior, stand with me whenever I needed, he is one of the kindest, most thoughtful people I know. Amit, Shafiqullah, and Suhail have been the great batch mates and friends. These three are the talented and tolerant individuals, especially during dhaba times in Aligarh. Dr. Yashpal, Dr. Dinesh and Dr. Vikas have been great friends and seniors at IUAC, always extended their helping hands for me. Arshad and Amir, both are the great friends made my stay lively and joyful at AMU. Ashvani has been a great friend, a
great listener for all what I want to say. I thank Manoj, Monodeep da, Rajeeb da and Aditi Ji for very nice company and I can never forget the enjoyable food they arranged for me when I was at Dresden, Germany. Meeting and talking with Priyanka Ji and Sonia Ji have been memorable moments in my life.

I thank to all of my friends who made my Ph. D duration cherished and extremely joyful either academically or non-academically specially to Ms. Mona, Ms. Jyoti, Ms. Sonika, Ms. Farah, Ms. Neeti, Dr. Vinay, Dr. Kaushik, Dr. Chandra Shekhar, Appanbabu, Rohit, Salahuddin, Bhupendra, Dr. Ayaz, Md. Tariq, Khan Arif, Dr. Danish, Dr. Dharmender, Arshad, Rahbar, Dr. Zafar, Vivek, Vipin, Zaheer, Saleem, Ajay, Anil, Shiv, Rahul, Ankush, Abhishek, Shivpoojan Patel and Jai Prakash.

I must now thank the people without whom I wouldn’t have made it where I am today. I am very much fortunate to have a caring family, who always stands behind me in my endeavours and believes in me. Specially, elder brothers (Jai Prakash and Yashwant) and their wives (Vibha and Pratibha) have cared me like anything and constantly supported throughout my studies. I thank to my nephews Bhanu, Luv and Kush for their inspirational and innocent love. Finally, I thank my parents, Ratna Devi and Ram Narayan, for being my true best friends in this world and a constant inspiration for accomplishing any impossible task. I own everything I achieved to them. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the financial support from UGC and CSIR, New Delhi in the form of JRF and SRF, respectively.

I am sure that I forgot people. Thanks to everyone who contributed to make my Ph.D duration successful and enjoyable!

Aligarh
February 2009

DINESH KUMAR SHUKLA