ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my sincere gratitude to my Research Guide, Prof. Yogesh T. Jasrai, for his invaluable and critical suggestions and giving me all freedom he has given to me to express myself throughout the course of investigations and during the preparation of this manuscript. I regard myself fortunate to be educated by him, profiting from his creative scientific imaginations and elaborate discussions on the subject.

Prof. G. Prathapasenan (Head, Department of Botany) has shown great interest in the progress of the research, enriched the thesis with his suggestions and given me the freedom to use the facilities in the department. I express my sincere thanks to him.

It was the inspiration of my teacher, Late Prof. A. Sasidharan, that led me to choose the line of research as my career. I take this opportunity to remember him.

I am especially indebted to Dr. S. Mangalan and Mr. Manian for their help in choosing the right place of work for my research and for the interest they have shown in the progress of the research.

I extent my profound sense of gratitude to Dr. Vyjayanti A. Chauhan for her wholehearted help, advices and constant inspirations from the beginning of my research to the preparation of this manuscript. I thank all my lab mates Ms. Anju John, Mini M. George, Rebeka Sultana, Jullien Palmer and Dr. Ramesh kannan for their help cooperation.

My sincere thanks are for my friends Drs. P.K. Pradeep, G. Bijukumar and Jitendra Gavali for their timely help during the preparation of the thesis. I am also thankful to my friends Drs. Suresh, Gireesh kumar, Gangadhar, Suresh, and Messrs. Dharmendra Shah, Dharmendra Patel (Dept. of Microbiology, M.S.U.), Mr. Shylesh (Amala Cancer Research Institute, Trichur), Mr. Ajit kumar (TBGRI, Trivandrum) and Mr. Thomson kuruvilla (RRL - Trivandrum) for their help during the tenure of my research work.

My thanks are due to Dr. Krishnan (Dept. of Archaeology, M.S.U.) for his kind help in Atomic Absorption Spectrometry and to Dr. Rao (Dept. of Economics, M.S.U.) for advices on statistical analysis using computer software.

I am grateful to Dr. V.K. Murulesan, who taught me the microphotography and other photographic techniques. I also thank Mr. Ravi, for clicking some of the photographs.

I am thankful to my parents and my brother for their constant inspiration, moral support, love and encouragement they have rendered to me to achieve this target.

I am obliged to CSIR, New Delhi for financial assistance in the form of Junior and Senior Research Fellowships, without which my longing for doing research would have been evaporated without fruition.

(Remakanthan A.)