ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have great pleasure to acknowledge my profound gratitude, to my research guide, Dr. Merlee Teresa, M. V., Reader, Department of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, for her invaluable guidance, inspiration and unfailing encouragement throughout the course of this investigation. I wish to owe my gratitude to the former Principal, Rev. Sr. Emeline and the present Principal, Rev. Sr. Tessa, of St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, for providing me the required facilities in the research centre of the college to carry out the present study.

My deep sense of indebtedness to Dr. (Sr.) Avita, Professor (Retd.), Department of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, for her valuable commendations and moral support. I am obliged to Prof. Smt. K.K. Parvathy, Prof. (late) Smt. Thangom Mathew, Smt. Sophiamma Paul and Smt. Sheela K.R.—former heads of our department for their co-operation and inspiration.

I am thankful to Smt. N.C. Marykutty, the present head of the Botany Department, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, for her directions and advice. I specially thank Dr. Tara C.P., Department of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Shri. M.J. Paul, Department of Botany, Bharat Mata College and Dr. A.K. Pradeep, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Calicut, for providing me certain specimens required for the present study.

I recall with gratitude the authorities of the Plant Sciences Department of Calicut University, School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, Regional Herbarium, B.S.I., Coimbatore, Herbarium unit of TBGRI, Palode, Environmental Resources and Research Centre, Pettah, Thiruvananthapuram and University Centre, Karyavattom for providing me access to library and laboratory.
My sincere thanks to Dr. P. K. K. Nair (ERRC), Dr. N. G. Nair (ERRC), Dr. N. Mohanan (TBGRI), Dr. G. Kulandaivelu (Madurai Kamaraj University) and Dr. G. M. Nair (University Centre, Karyavattom) for their constructive criticism and suggestions.

I am specially obliged to Dr. Liza Jacob of my department, who devoted a lot of time for me in preparing and compiling the thesis. My thanks are also due to my colleagues Mrs. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, Mrs. Romilly Mendez; Prof. Achamma T. U. (Retd.) and Mrs. Elsam Joseph; the research scholars of the department – Mrs. Beena B. Nair, Mrs. Reemol Scaria, Mrs. Anitha Sajeev, Miss. Elsie Ouseph Padikkala (Rev. Sr. Josita), Mr. Saju Abraham, Miss. Rekha K. and Mrs. Bindu Alex and also to the non-teaching staff of the department of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam for their whole-hearted and sincere cooperation.

Let me acknowledge my gratitude to the UGC for granting me FIP for the study and to the University staff for their timely assistance.

I gratefully appreciate Mr. Seydali A. and Mr. Roy Chacko of ERRC for the help rendered in micro-photographical works and Mr. Jensen T. J. of the Jeyes media, Kochi for the neat and stylistic execution of the computer print-out of the thesis.

My unbounded thanks to my beloved parents for their inspiration, prayers and blessings. I extend my indebtedness to my husband for his incessant encouragement. I can not express in words the help rendered by my sister and brother-in-law at various stages of preparation of the thesis.

Above all, I thank the Almighty for providing me this wonderful opportunity and for the successful completion of the thesis.

LIZZY MATHEW