ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have great pleasure to acknowledge my profound gratitude and intense debt to my guide Dr. (Sr.) Avita, Professor (Retd.) Dept. of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam for her immense encouragement, sound criticism and motivation to complete this work.

The real spirit and inspiration for me to do this work is His Excellency, Mar. Mathew Arackal, Bishop of Kanjirapally. He encouraged me and provided all the necessary helps in all stages of this work. My deep gratitude to him for his personal care to me to complete this work.

I offer my sincere thanks to the former Principal, Rev. Sr. Emeline and the present Principal, Rev. Sr. Tessa, of St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam for providing the facilities in the research centre of the college to carry out the present study.

My deep sense of indebtedness to Dr. Merlee Teresa M.V., Reader (Retd.) Dept. of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam, for her valuable commendations, encouragement and moral support.

I am obliged to Rev. Fr. Augustine Kariappuram, the Executive Director of Peermade Development Society for providing me the required facilities to carry out the present study.

I am immensely thankful to Prof. N.C. Marykutty, Head, Dept. of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam and Prof. Sheela, K.R., former head and all the members of the teaching staff for their co-operation. My special thanks to Dr. Liza Jacob and Mrs. Lizzy Mathew who helped and inspired me in all the stages of my study.
The co-operation and timely assistance of PDS is a real factor behind the successful completion of this work. I remember Rev. Sr. Francina, former programme director of FDS for her valuable commendations. I recall with thanks Fr. Hubby Mathew (Programme Director), Sr. Anitha and all my good friends in PDS for their whole-hearted and sincere co-operation.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. P. Pushpangadan, the former director of Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Thiruvananthapuram and the present director of National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow for allowing me to use the library facilities. I place on record my deep appreciation with gratitude Dr. Rajashekharan and Mr. Shanavaskhan of TBGRI for their help rendered during this study. I owe my gratitude to Prof. T.A. Panicker, Professor (Retd.), Kerala Varma College, Thrissur for his assistance in all the stages of the study.

I will be failing in my duties, if I do not thank tribal communities of Kannampady, Vanchivayal, Kumily and Purakkayam. This work is a result of the sincere co-operation and help of 'vaidyas’, house wives and youth of these communities. They helped me by giving their best within their limitations, without which I would not have completed this work. I place on record my heartfelt gratitude to them.

I am specially obliged to research scholars, Mrs. Beena B. Nair, Mrs. Reemol Scaria, Mrs. Romily Margaret Mendez, Mrs. Anitha C.T., Sr. Jositta, Ms. Rekha, K., Mrs. Bindu Alex, Mrs. Selinamma Joseph of the research centre of Dept. of Botany, St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam for their sincere co-operation.
I thank the non teaching staff of the Dept. of Botany, St. Teresa's college for their valuable services.

Let me acknowledge my gratitude to Fr. Dr. Mathew Maleparambil, principal, St. Thomas College, Palai for his valuable suggestions.

I appreciate Mr. Jenson T.J. of the Jeyes Media, Kochi, for the neat and stylistic execution of the computer work of the thesis.

My unbounded thanks to my beloved parents, brothers and sisters for their inspiration, prayers and blessings. I extend my indebtedness to my wife for her co-operation and inspiration.

Above all I thank the Almighty for bestowing His blessings on me for the successful completion of the thesis.

Saju Abraham