Acknowledgements

It gives me great pleasure in expressing my gratitude to all those people who have supported me during my research studies. It would not have been possible to reach this stage of writing my doctoral thesis without the encouragement, help and support of host of people around me; whether in my personal life, the academic or professional spheres. Unfortunately, for want of space, only some of them could be find a mention here.

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my guide Dr. G. J. Phatak for the relentless support during my Ph.D study and research. It was his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge that helped me to pursue deep into this exiting area of research. He let me experience the research of fuel cells area and helped dealing with practical issues beyond the textbooks. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my research study.

The expert advice, support and friendly nature of my co-guide, Prof. S. P. Dattagupta, has been invaluable on both an academic and a personal level, for which I am extremely grateful. Regular discussions with him were sources of incredible ideas used in this work. Most of the results described in this thesis would not have been obtained without his support. I owe a great deal of appreciation and gratitude for SAIF and CNRTS characterization facilities at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB), Mumbai.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Dr. D. P. Amalnerkar, Executive Director, C-MET, Dr. U. P. Mulik, Director, C-MET, and C-MET authorities for their support and permitting me to avail lab facilities during this work. It’s my pleasure to acknowledge Dr. Shany Joseph and Mrs. Vijaya Giramkar for their constant moral support, valuable suggestions and untried help during glass synthesis, Impedance analysis set up development etc. It is my immense pleasure to mention Dr. B. B. Kale, Dr. S. B. Rane and all other scientists and non technical staff of C-MET, Pune, Thrissur and Hyderabad for all their kind support during my research work.

I am grateful to my teachers, Dr. P. B. Joshi, Dr. S. B. Kulkarni, Dr. Y. D. Kolekar, Dr. L. D. Jadhav, Dr. S. D. Sartale who laid seeds of enthusiasm and passion in my pursuit of knowledge. Interactions with them helped me to improve my skills as a good listener, taught me how to organize my thoughts, and phrase my points.

I have been blessed with a friendly and cheerful group of fellow research students in our group. My colleagues, Vivek, Varsha, Adwait, Shekhar, Manish, Govind, Sudhir, Chandrakant, Sachin, Pralhad, Shridharkrishna, Shashikant, Mangesh, Mayur, Sachin,
Jagannath, Sudhir (LS), Vikrant, Minnath, Adwaita, Payal, Shroti, Kunti, Sonali, Sunil, Dr. Hawaldar have all extended their support in a very special way, and I have learnt a lot from them, through their personal and scholarly interactions, their suggestions at various points of my research. Special thanks go to Ravindra, Ramesh, Gaurav for their invaluable help during my experimental work and characterization support. I am also thankful to people from industry, Mr. Mohan Bhide, Mr. Madhukar from ProVAK and Mr. Abhang, Mr. Nair who supported me in fabrication of experimental set ups and timely fruitful discussions.

I wish to thank my best friends, Shridhar, Sushant, Amit, Lakshmikant, Amit, Vijay and Keskar for their motivation and moral support. My friends from post graduate class Deepti, Jyoti, Sharad, Sikandar, Kishor and Manik deserve special mention here for their friendship, constant support, and encouragement. This list is incomplete without acknowledging Dr. Tanaji Gujar, Dr. Vashali Gujar, Dr. Pravin Shinde, Amol and Atul, who were the source of inspiration to me in my early days and who provided me literature support related to my field.

This work is dedicated to my father late Mr. Gajanan, it is his blessings and inspirations that motivated me to reach this point. I owe so much thanks to my mother Nisha and my sister Kavita who were continuously supporting me throughout and leaving me free in all my decisions. I always fall short of words and felt impossible to describe their support in words. I take this opportunity to express my love and affection for my better half Mrs. Punam. It is her strong moral support, direct criticism and belief in me that helped me to overcome depressions and failures during this work. Her help during this work is unforgettable. I also want to thank my in laws and all my relatives for their unconditional support.

Finally, I earnestly thank all those who have helped me directly/ indirectly towards completion of this dissertation.

Thank you one and all.

Shrikant Gajanan Kulkarni