Acknowledgements

Language is the most eloquent vehicle of human expression, yet on occasions, one finds it difficult to get appropriate words to express feelings aptly. Speech fails me and I fumble for words of gratitude for my venerated supervisors Prof. R. K. Wancchoo, Department of Chemical Engineering and Technology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, and Prof. S. K. Sharma, Department of Chemical Engineering and Technology & Honorary Director, Energy Research Centre, Panjab University, Chandigarh. For their exceptionally versatile guidance, pliant suggestions, constructive criticism and keen interest throughout the course of present investigation and preparation of this manuscript, it would have not been possible for the present investigation to take shape of this thesis. It was a pleasure having worked under their esteemed guidance.

I am grateful to Prof. S. K. Sharma, Honorary Director, Energy Research Centre, Panjab University, Chandigarh for providing me the necessary laboratory facilities. I am also thankful to Prof. J. Singh, Chairman, Department of Chemical Engineering and Technology, Panjab University, Chandigarh for providing me the allied facilities.

I am grateful to Prof. H. S. Sagar, the then Principal, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Regional Engineering College, Jalandhar, for sanctioning the study leave and allowing me to work at Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Thanks are due to my colleague and friend, Ritu for the cooperation, assistance, and encouragement extended during the course of the investigation. A word of thanks and appreciation is also recorded for other colleagues in the lab Parminder, Puneet, Vivek, Pooja and Navdeep for their cooperation, cheerful assistance and maintaining harmonious ambiance.

The cooperation extended by the technical and supporting staff of Energy Research Centre and Department of Chemical Engineering and Technology, P.U. Chandigarh, is appreciatively acknowledged.

The unconditional support, continuous encouragement and bounteous love bestowed by my father that sustained me during the entire course of study is acknowledged with gratitude. No choice of words will suffice to adequately register my thanks to my wife, Monika, who enduring "the irksome me" stood by me throughout the investigation and provided much needed support at every step. While being at Chandigarh away from home, it was the love and affection of my kids, Sujay and Bhavika that always prompted me to work hard and with full strength to accomplish the task at its earliest.

Lastly, I thank the Almighty for giving me the strength to bear the hardships during the difficult phases of the work.

5/12/03
Chandigarh

Ajay Bansal