ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who helped me during my PhD study. Many people have made invaluable contributions, both directly and indirectly to my research.

My deepest gratitude goes and foremost to my research guide Dr. M. Thangaraj, Assistant Professor in Marine Biotechnology, Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology, for his unfailing guidance, constant criticism and encouragement, magnanimous support and kind co-operation in every step of my research work.

I thank Prof. K. Kathiresan, Director, CAS in Marine Biology, Faculty of Marine Sciences, Annamalai University for providing all the necessary facilities and support.

I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. T. Balasubramanian, Former Dean and Director, CAS in Marine Biology, Faculty of Marine Sciences, Annamalai University, for providing necessary facilities and support.

I am highly grateful to Dr. Ricardo Betancur, Department of Biological Sciences, George Washington University, USA for leaving footprint and providing confidence in catfish systematics and Dr. Praveen Karanth, Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, Bangalore for his valuable support and guidance in molecular phylogeny methods.

I am very much grateful to Emeritus Prof. Sivaramakrishnan, Department of Zoology, Madras Christian College, Chennai for being a great mentor in my study.

I wish to thank Academician Hashim, Assistant Professor, University of Kerala, Trivandrum who led me into the world of scientific research. His profound knowledge of life sciences stimulates me to loving this beautiful scientific realm. He is the most excellent and evergreen state of the art Biologist.

I am highly thankful to Dr. B. Raja and Dr. E. Balamurugan, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, Annamalai University for the help and constant encouragement.
I also extend my sincere gratitude to other staff members and non-teaching staff of faculty of Marine Sciences, Annamalai University for their kind support and encouragement.

Special thanks to my unit Research Scholars Dr. J. Subburaj, M. Rajasekar, P. Suresh Kumar, R. Thirumaraiselvi, Reena Singh, Vishruth Prem, K. Muthazhagan, Sunil Kumar Sahu, V. Ramanadevi for their help during my entire research carrier.

I am very glad to extend my sincere thanks to scholars R. Sadeesh Kumar, S. Chandrasekar, P. Arunagiri, C. Elaiyaraja and Dr. M. Selva Kumar and Bharathiraja for their timely help during my research work.

My Special thanks to my friends, V. Swaminathan, Dr. J. Sivasubramanian, J. Manivannan, T. Silambarasan, Prithviraj Kapoor, R. Mathiazhagan, for the untiring help and their moral support in every step of my study period.

I owe my gratitude to my friends, V. Yugandhar and B. Thulasiraman who gave me their personal help during my entire study.

I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to my grandparents, R. M. Punniyakoti and Late. R. P. Mangayarkarasi, my Uncle R. P. Arul and Aunt Dr. A. Vasanthy for nurturing my eclectic interests from a very young age, for their compassion and understanding of the many turns my life has taken, and for the unconditional freedom, support and love that they have given me as I have pursued my dreams. For all this and much more, I dedicate this thesis to them.

Further, I wish to thank Laksha Computers, Therinppu, Annamalai Nagar, for the personalized service and professional expertise in the nice execution of the thesis.

(T. R. BARATH KUMAR)