ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is truly the outcome of the capability of my two supervisors, and I am proud to have made a modest contribution to its accomplishment. Professor Biman Kumar Dutta, Head of the Department of Ecology and Environmental Science, and former Dean of School of Environmental Sciences, Assam University, Silchar, supervised my research with such expertise and competence that my entire burden was unduly light. On top of my awe of admiration about him, I can not just evade mentioning one of his innate flairs called diplomacy that is so idiosyncratic of him, and for which he shall remain my inspiration.

Had it not been for the ability and agility of my co-supervisor, Dr. Bishnupada Roy, Reader, Department of Zoology, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, this thesis would never see its fruition. If this research deserves any credit, it should unreservedly go to him, and if there is any deficiency in the presentation or interpretation, the responsibility is mine alone. His great tact, unfeigned enthusiasm and encouragement really surged me up from my state of apathy, and ignorance. But for him I would not have learned to love the otherwise repugnant parasitic worms as I now do.

Dr. A. K. Das, Reader and former Head of the Department of Ecology and Environmental Science, Assam University, had to endure and resolve a lot of my inconveniences as I worked from a distant place, and he never failed to pacify me from feeling alienated when I am in the department. The entire faculty, office staffs and my fellow research scholars in the department always kept open arms whenever I had a need of them and their service; I am deeply impressed by and indebted to their amiability and assistance.

My experiments were carried out at the Department of Zoology, Pachhunga University College, Mizoram University, Aizawl, and I am grateful to the Principal Dr. H. Lallungmuana, and not forgetting the former, Mr. P. Gohain, for providing all the available facilities at my disposal for the success of my research. Dr. S. N. Ramanujam, my predecessor as the Head of Department of Zoology, Pachhunga University College, now Professor of Zoology at NEHU, Shillong, was always willing to lend a helping hand when I started my work. Not a mere colleague, Mr. H. Lalthanzara ever remains a companion in my academic life, I really appreciate his support. I am also happy now that a good fresh batch of colleagues has arrived to encourage me. I heartily thank my own meager staffs, Mr. Laldinthara Hnnte and Mr. Zothanzuala, who rendered a lot of their energy in procuring the local fowls and the plant specimens.

I am grateful to Prof. Veena Tandon, Head of the Department of Zoology, NEHU, Shillong, for giving me access to the image analyzer and for freely providing her research documents. My thanks are due to the Head, Regional Sophisticated Instrumentation Centre, NEHU, for taking care of the scanning electron microscopic works.

Financial assistance in the form of Senior Research Fellowship from the Department of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Mizoram, is gratefully acknowledged.

Above all, my family became the chief cornerstone in motivating my lethargy and perseverance throughout this work; I sincerely owe my achievements to them. My brother, and benefactor, Mama (K. Lalpartlana, 1858-2002) would have cherished the fruit of his support had life itself permitted him so. I dedicate this work to him.

I can not press my intelligence of better words to sum up my feeling of gratitude than to use my native expression:

"Ka lawm e"

K. Lalchhandama

1/4/08