ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. M Ramachandran for his immense support throughout the period of my research in the Department of Economics, Pondicherry University. This thesis owes a lot to his untiring efforts, especially during the final stages of the work. He has never shown any reluctance in spending long hours of work, even on holidays, in the process of finalising the thesis. I am extremely thankful to him for his efforts in making this work possible.

I express my sincere thanks to the Prof. M. Ramadass, Dean, School of Management and Director- Studies, Educational Innovation, Rural Reconstruction, Pondicherry University for his administrative and moral support throughout the period of my research.

I thank my doctoral committee members Prof. D. Sambandhan, and Prof. Chandrasekara Rao, who had spent their valuable time to read and comment on my write-up. I thank them for their support and kind co-operation.

My special thanks are due to Dr S. Raja Sethu Durai with whom I have had highly rewarding interactions at various stages of research that strengthened my understanding of the subject and improved the quality of the thesis. I also thank Dr. Jerome Samraj for providing me timely support during the final stages of my research.

I thank all the faculty members of the Department Prof. P. Ibrahim, Prof. P. Muthaiyan, Dr. V. Nirmala, Dr. Amarendra Samantaraya, Dr.A. Sankaran, Dr.H.Yasmeen Sultana, and Dr. R. Lusome for their support throughout the research period. The interactions that I have had with all of them at various stages of my research have been highly useful.
I acknowledge and extend my sincere gratitude for the brotherly guidance and support rendered by late Prof. S. Amanulla, Dr. C. R. Ramanathan, Ms. Sivagnanasingh and Ms. Geetha.

I am grateful to the supporting staff of the Department of Economics, Pondicherry University for their kind co-operation and my special thanks are due to the staff of the library, computer centre and other administrative sections of the Pondicherry University for their valuable support.

There are a few friends without whose support it would have been impossible for me to overcome certain difficulties and I express my deep sense of gratitude for the timely support rendered by Dr. C.U. Travelsinari, M. Sankaran, B. Balaji, Dr. K. Durairaj, Dr. U. Devasenathipathi, S. Mariappan, A. Arul Jason, Dr. Dharmalingam, S. Ramesh, K. Velmarugan, Dr. Selvaraj, Veeramani, Sunil Paul, J.Vikramathithan, Ramesh Kumar, A. Senthil Raja, Karmanivannan, Suchita Tripathy, P. Loganathan, V. Murugadass, Nagaraj, Rajamanickam, T. Rajasekar, China Sasi, Linkon Mondal, Anandh, Gopinathan, Revish Mathew, Deepthi Anna Thangachan and Sartaj Rasool.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my parents, K. Arjunan and late A. Veerammal. I am indebted to my brothers Mr. A. Murthy, Mr. A. Ayyanar, Mr. A. Raman, Mr. A. Lakshamanan and to the people of my village for their love and care during the course of research work.

I dedicate the whole study and its outcome to the farsighted visionary who instituted Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship that empowered the students from socio-economically deprived sections to access the intellectual academic arena to partake and prove their mettle on par with others.

A VADIVEL