The wait is finally over and I am ready to submit my Ph.D research work. This work has been an incredible roller coaster ride for me, professionally and personally. There have been countless moments of hope and despair, trials and triumphs, the culmination of which has led to a more than satisfying outcome.

Along this journey, there have been lots of people who applauded when I reached milestones and gave me the much needed push, when I hit the roadblocks. I believe it is meaningless to present this work without acknowledging them first.

I must begin with my guide and supervisor for this research work, Dr. Rachel Reena Philip. Herself an accomplished researcher and academician, she has helped me with the much needed insights, critiques and advise every step of the way. But, more so, she gave me the freedom and trust to make my own path and explore avenues. I cannot thank her enough.

Dr. Manju T has been a long time mentor for me ever since my days at Sree Sankara College. I thank her for the direction she has given me since and for motivating me when times were tough.

My heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Johns Naduvath, who gave me his support and research guidance during the summer internship programme at IIT Bombay. I also acknowledge Dr. Sudhanshu Mallick and Dr. Parag Bargava who made possible the summer internship programme at the Metallurgical Department, IIT Bombay.

This has been a collaborative work, made possible with support from various institutes and their staff. I am indebted to Dr. T. Sripathi and Dr. G.S. Okram, scientists at IUC, Indore for helping me carry out the characterisations. I have immense gratitude towards UGC DAE Consortium for Scientific Research, Indore for the financial support through the 'Collaborative Research Scheme'.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Stephen Remillard and Dr. Paul De Young, Hope College, United States, for RBS measurements of my samples.
I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. B. M. K. Jayaraj, Department of Physics, Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) for a collaborative work as part of the Aspire Research Internship Programme.

I thank Dr. B. Pradeep, Department of Physics, Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), for his valuable inputs.

I thank Sajan and Anuroop, CUSAT, for their valuable suggestions and helping me with the SEM imaging.

I thank SAIF-IIT Bombay, STIC-CUSAT for various measurements.

I started my research work at Union Christian College, Aluva, which has ever since been my home away from home. I will certainly miss the campus. I wholeheartedly thank the principal and management for facilitating this research work by providing the lab and other supports in time and often out of time. I also remember all the other teachers and non teaching staff at the Department of Physics for their contribution.

The wonderful company of my lab mates made this research work even more enjoyable and memorable. I cannot thank enough, Rajani 'Chechi’, Anitha Miss, Bindu miss, Sheeba Miss, Sinitha Miss, Julie Miss, Keerthy and Hilal for their honest support and fruitful suggestions. You will always have a place in my heart.

I acknowledge the Department of Physics, Sree Sankara College for the support throughout my Ph.D programme through research collaboration. I express my sincere gratitude to Vrinda Miss, Nimmi Miss, Ben Jose Sir, Vinod Sir for their support and valuable suggestions.

Thank you, Sebin and Tijin for the fun evenings at ‘Kavadiar’. The afternoon coffee and movies made bad days good. Thank you Sajith, who helped me design this report.

I thank Swathy, for the love and care, and for being a constant source of inspiration.

It's difficult for me to conjure words to describe the support I received from my family during this endeavor. My Appachan and Amma laid the foundation for my academic life and have been my pillars of strength ever since.
Robin ‘Chettan’ always had my back whenever I needed help, financially or otherwise and always gave me words of wisdom, whenever I needed some. I’ll always be indebted to him for the support.

This Ph.D was the dream of my sweet sister, Aijisha. Thank you for everything and I hope I made you proud.

Finally, a word of gratitude to anyone whom I may have missed unintentionally or contributed in one way or the other. Thank you.