Acknowledgements

Before bowing my head to almighty “GOD”, I would like to express my gratitude to my Papa Ji “Shri Vasu Dev Sharma” and mummy ji “Mrs. Neelam Sharma” for showing me the right path and encouraging me to undertake and accomplish this travail task.

It is my profound privilege to place on record my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. (Mrs.) Renu Bhardwaj, Professor, Department of Botanical & Environmental Sciences, G.N.D.U., Amritsar, for her guidance, help, constructive feedback and persistent motivation. Besides research guidance, I am grateful for your tender words and encouragement for making me feel better.

I sincerely thank my co-supervisor, Dr. Pratap Kumar Pati, Reader, Department of Biotechnology, G.N.D.U., Amritsar, for his continuous support in the Ph.D. program. He showed me different ways to approach a research problem and the need to be relentless to accomplish any goal.

I have deepest concern of regard for Dr. Saroj Arora, Reader and former-Head and Dr. A.P. Vig, Head, Department of Botanical and Environment Sciences, G.N.D.U., Amritsar, for providing me infrastructural facility to carry out the research work. I am grateful to Prof. G. S. Virk, Prof. Avinash Nagpal, Dr. A. S. Soodan, Dr. Satwinderjit Kaur, Er. M.S. Bhatti, Er. Bhupinder Pal Singh, Ms. Rajinder Kaur and Dr. Jatinder Kaur in the Department for their invaluable advice in course of my research work.

I would like to thank Prof. A. K. Thukral, Department of Botanical & Environmental Sciences and Dr. Badru-Dozza, Department of Human Genetics, G.N.D.U., Amritsar for their assistance in statistics. Special thanks go to Dr. Geetika Sirhindhi, Asst. Professor, Patiala University; Dr. Vinay Bhardwaj, Sr. Scientist, CPRI, Shimla; Dr. S.R. Voleti, DRR, Hyderabad and Mr. Sunil Sharma, IARI, New Delhi for their timely help.

My sincere thanks and appreciation also goes to S. Malkit Singh, Office Staff and Malli Staff, Department of Botanical and Environmental Sciences, G.N.D.U., Amritsar. I convey my sincere thanks to my colleagues, seniors, friends and other lab mates for their whole hearted support, co-operation and affection. I take this opportunity with much pleasure to thank all the people who have directly or indirectly helped, instructed and taught me through the course of my journey towards producing this thesis.

I am extremely gratified to Mr. Ravi Bhardwaj, Ms. Sita Prasher, Mr. A.L. Prasher, Mr. Ramesh Gautam, Mr. Ramesh Nadda, Mr. Paramjeet Dhiman, Mr. Hans Raj Gautam, Mr. B.C. Gautam, Mr. R.K. Gautam, Mr. R.P. Gautam, Mr. Dev Raj Sharma and their families for endurance throughout my hostel life.

No words could adequately express all that I owe to Mr. Ashutosh Sharma for his tremendous forbearance, confidence, and unconditional support. I am also thankful to my younger brother Abhinav Parashar for bearing my absence during course of research work. I am delighted to Subhash and Sandeep for being the sources of inspiration. Also, constant love from all my brothers and sisters will always be memorized. At the end, I could not forget to remember my Nani Ji and my sincere credits also go to my Nana ji “Mr. S.R. Gautam”.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support from DST, New Delhi and DST-INSPIRE, Ministry of Science and Technology, New Delhi for providing the Fellowship.

(Indu Sharma)