

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Kunal Sinha, for the exceptional research conditions and opportunities I had working alongside him. This thesis has become possible due to his tremendous support and insightful criticism throughout this process. His knowledge and commitment to the highest standards inspired me greatly at all stages of my work.

I am immensely grateful to Dr. Shiju Sam Varughese, Dr. Parvathi K. Iyer, Dr. Hemant Kumar, Adv. Vishal Sinha, Bijender Barsiwal, Chandrakant Ingle (Bhau), Dr. Anilkumar Mane, Dr. Sumedh Ranvir, Dr. Shivdatta Wavalkar, Nitin Hiwale, Dr. Ashok Kumar Maurya, Dr. Kishor Jadhav, D. Vijay Utsav, Dr. Mehul Chawda, Dr. Pravin Rathod, Dr. Azamat Ali, Dr. Vikas Kumar and Chandu Balande for providing me with intellectual support.

I would also like to express my deep, incomparable gratitude to Dr. Seema Chawla Madam for taking out her precious time to proofread the final draft of my thesis.

There are a number of other people whom I need to mention here for being instrumental in the completion and submission of my thesis. I would like to thank Nitesh Narnolia and Mousam for helping me with improving the drafts of the third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of my thesis. My thanks go to Shabnam Shaikh for helping me in creating better drafts for my publications. Sanket Sirsat's presence was crucial and significant during the field survey. I also thank to Abhishek Lakkad for sharing his ideas in improving the first chapter of my thesis. Ashutosh Karewar and Anant Ujagare helped me in my efforts to find the most recent versions of secondary data required in my research. Vinod Singh also helped me in improving some portions of my thesis. Ranjana Bharti, Nitesh Desai, Sheeraz Elahi, Shivmohan Prajapati, Rajiv Paswan, Sandeep Waghmare, Sidharth Maske, Vasant Gawai, Sudhakar Ingole, Manish Dubey, Vandana Singh, Chandrahash Patel, Deepak Solanki, Rahul Kamble, Abhinav Jha, Piyushkumar Parmar, Hasmukhsinh Chauhan and all friends also helped me in various ways during the completion of my doctoral research.

My gratitude also goes to Dhananjay Jadhav, Rahul Bhau, Dr. Savita (Tai), Sunita (Tai), Deepa (Tai), Sujata (Tai), Prakash (Dada), Babasaheb Jogdand, Gautam Nikam, Sachin Waghu, Vinod Jadhav, Balasaheb Nikam (Bhau) and Atul Salve.

A special thanks to my younger sister Nikita, elder brothers Sumit, Kakasaheb, Kailas, Ajay, Bhanudas, Sunil, Dilip and Trambak. My thanks go to my sisters-in-law Sonali, Alka, Jayshree, and Reshma as well as my aunt Nilu (Attya) for their kind support and help. My sweet nephews Digvijay, Kabeer, Kunal and Samyak have always been a constant reason for my smile.

I would like to express my deep thanks to Amita Pradhan for her kind support during the procedure of this research work.

I would like to offer special thanks to my uncle Bhiraj and cousin brother Yuvraj, who are unfortunately no longer with us, for their continuous inspiration throughout my education.

Last but not the least no words can sufficiently express the sentiments of my deepest and unparalleled gratitude towards my parents for their incessant, unconditional support and encouragement during the pursuit of this Ph.D. work.

Waghmare Vikas Meghraj