Finally, the day has come. The most awaited one, giving me goose bumps. I am so excited that I am speechless. I have a lot to say but at the same time unable to speak a word. Everything has come down so perfectly and all I can think or say is THANK YOU!! I am really grateful to all the people who contributed to, in varied ways, to make this work substantial.

First and foremost, I want to thank my mentor Prof. B. Suresh. It has been an honour to work under his guidance. He has taught me, both consciously and unconsciously, how wonderful experimental biology is. I appreciate all his contributions of time, ideas and work ethics to make my Ph.D. experience productive and positively stimulating. The joy and enthusiasm he spreads in the lab, makes the place worth staying and living. He has been very motivating during this challenging pursuit of Ph.D. I am also thankful to him for setting the benchmark as a successful biologist and professor. His words: 'Self-help is the best help!' and his 'highlights' of wisdom have always been an inspiring factor for me, and I shall always remain indebted to him.

I would to like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Head, Department of Zoology, Prof. Dolly Kumar, for providing me the environment and teaching assignments at the Faculty of Environmental Studies that encouraged me to pursue the field of teaching. Since then, her unending support and contagious positivity have always helped me to stand out in the crowd.

I also would like to thank the teaching faculties of the Department of Zoology for all the help and facilities extended through them. I am also grateful to Prof. Mankodi for giving me the necessary academic and non-academic works, that helped me to explore my potential and be valuable to the department.

My gratitude to The Gujarat State Biotechnology Mission, Govt. of Gujarat, for providing me the fellowship during my Ph.D. tenure, supporting the research in the lab and allowing me to participate in various worldwide biology conferences.

I am indebted to all the lab members for their genuine contributions. I owe special thanks to Dr. Pratyush Patankar and Dr. Pranav Buch for imparting me knowledge of their respective fields and for always treating me like their younger brother. Hail the 3 musketeers! During my initial days in the lab, Pranav, had been that one senior I completely depended on and gradually became very good friends with. I am a big fan of his innovative ideas (cover page being one of them). The significant outcome of this research draws greatly from Sonam and Isha. This manuscript *Jodi* deserves applauds for their dedication in making my impossible manuscript turn possible. Many thanks to Sonam ben Patel turned Gosai and Isha mulqi Ranadive. Kashmira, being our English tutor in the lab, has been much resourceful in the thesis correction. Her patience and commitment to the work is highly appreciating. Not to forget the selfie gueen of the lab, Urja, who has always been supportive, and remained the *egg* partner in research work, besides being the *chai* partner. Our new lab members, Vishakha (for her knack of pinpointing the mistakes) and Bhaval (for her active participation) are worth appreciating (Harshita too deserves special mention from the Entomology lab). I would also like to give credence to Hiral Murawala, Shailja Rajaram, Shweta Umar, Neha Gohil, Dr. Mittal Ravalji, Dr. Ramesh Verma, Dr. Vishwesh Dalal for all the help during my Ph.D. tenure. Sonam Patel, Isha Ranadive, Kashmira Khaire and Vishakha Nesari have also helped proofread the bibliography. The journey so far would have been certainly tiresome, but the dissertation students made it quite easy. Uzma,

Ankita, Venus, Priya, Archana, and Chomphel were hardworking and joyous that kept the pressure at bay. All of them have helped and allowed me to complete my thesis on time and in utmost peaceful atmosphere! It has been a pleasure to share my workspace and stationery with you guys. I wish all my lab members the very best for their future endeavours.

Apart from these wonderful people, I would like to mention few whose help and guidance has been very crucial for my studies. I thank Dr. Gowri Kumari, since her joining the department, she has been the go-to person whenever I have faced glitches in my work. Her expert comments have always paved my way to the manuscript. Prof. Bagchi with his 'Is it? observations, and Dr. Abhik Saha for inadvertently teaching me during my masters' dissertation, how to contribute in the proper functioning and maintenance of a research lab and planning the experiments. The Intensive poultry unit deserves a special mention for their vital contributions in the work – Dr. Ransingh Purohit and Mani aunty have supplied eggs in the crucial times. I also thank Mr. Hemant Parmar for the slide preparations.

Healthy mind certainly resides in a healthy body. I would love to thank the place where I have never missed a day - 'Fitness world'; and my all-time gym buddies Shrey and Himanshu. All those bike rides to late night coffee times and, of course, the most awaited weekend trips have been the necessary happy distractions that kept me going through rough times!

A special ton of thanks to my only childhood friend and her family (mine too) Devashree Trivedi. To them I owe my language ability, writing skills (and of course a lot more!), and my consequent submission of one more manuscript in a reputed journal which turned out to be the most fascinating part of the whole Ph.D. She has been my constant support and nurtured me in the times of thick and thin to which I will always been indebted to her and also for sharing the enthusiasm of my work and promptly extending help, whenever required. The times spent with all these beautiful souls have always been my most favourite, and will always remain my best stress relievers.

Any amount of words or deeds won't suffice the sacrifices my parents have made. They have always allowed and supported me to live the life I wanted and always encouraged to be a better person. I am immensely thankful to my brother Gaurav who has always been a positive support through the work. Also, Khushali and the Bhatts have been very supportive and encouraging through this phase and I extend my gratitude to them for the same. I am thankful to everyone from my immediate and extended family and well-wishers for their understanding of the time and energy I had to invest in materialising this thesis.

And finally, I have a lot to thank the Almighty for. I will always need blessings to carry on in life.

I aspire that through the culmination of this academic milestone, I shall prove the worth of every drop of sweat my father and mother spent on working for my education. I would love to see the amount of happiness and pride in their eyes when they hear "Sharmaji ka beta doctor ban gaya!!". I dedicate my thesis to my father (Mahesh) and my mother (Manju).

Shashikant Sharma