Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to some of the many people who have supported and encouraged me throughout the challenging enterprise.

First, I owe so much to my guide, **Dr. Sarita Gupta** who was always so gracious and generous with her time. Her careful contributions and advice gave this thesis its finishing touches. She reread all of the work, edited and made meaningful suggestions and contributions. I have the deepest respect, appreciation and admiration for her.

I would like to thank all the Heads of the department, Prof. S D Teleng, Prof. SS Katyare, Prof. T Mehta and Dr. G Nareshkumar for providing infrastructures to fulfill the objectives of my research project.

My special acknowledgement to **Dr. Sharad Gupta** for his valuable suggestions, which helped me in making this thesis more meaningful.

I am extremely grateful to **Dr. Sharma**, Dept. of Geology for his generous and timely help through out my research.

I am thankful to **Dr. Ami Raval** and **Mr. Mukesh Nayak** for preparing histological slides for me. My sincere thanks to **The Trustee**, **GCRI**, **Ahmedabad** for allowing me to avail the facility of gamma counters at their institute.

My special thanks to the Animal house in-charge Dr. MD Jani, Mr. Suresh Nate, Mr. Ramesh and Shanker bhai for their valuable help during this programme.

I am thankful to UGC for project fellowship and CSIR for senior research fellowship.

To **Vihas** who remains a trusted friend and cherished colleague for his thoughtfulness, grace, generosity and good sense of humor.

My sincere thanks to **KK** for his tremendous support and motivation though he is miles apart from me now.

I owe my greatest debt, of course, to **Jyoti** and **Laxmi** those who worked intimately with me. They have been most helpful and provided ready source of reference and encouragements.

I must add that research and working has been greatly stimulated by my friends, Siddhu, Vikas, Keyur, Prashant, Jignesh, Subhash, Shajil, Meena, Munjal, Gopit, Divya, Samir, Sayed and Sumit Bhaval. It's hard to be around such people without being

affected by their sheer energy and exuberance. Also to the new faces in the research group, Hiren, Minal and Priyanka.

I am thankful to Mr. Nehal Patel for his kind help in taking out the print outs of the thesis.

It will not be possible for me to go ahead without mentioning two names in this account, **Purvi** and **Ushma** who had worked in my lab during their M Sc dissertation programme. I owe so much to **Bindu** whose happy combination of love and dedication supported me during the project when I needed it most. I would not write or love without her. I am fortunate that she is my wife.

To my parents for their wonderful parenting and love throughout my life. They taught me from the earliest years that there was no more worthwhile way to spend a life than by caring for children. To my brother, Ajay who is simply the nicest person I know, and rest of my family members. Special thanks to my father-in-law who was very much supportive and helpful to me through out this project.

Finally thanks to the **Almighty God** for blessing me with a little angel, **Ananya** who brought bliss and luck in my life.

Anil