Acknowledgement

Prof. B. Suresh, the person who conceptualized this work and also believed in me that I am worth doing this deserves all my regards. I would thank for not only being my research supervisor but also a true mentor. He has always provided the suitable environment in the lab along with all the freedom of executing my research ideas. He has been one of the greatest inspirations in my life.

I would like to thank Prof. Dolly Kumar, head of the department of Zoology, for extending all the help and support to make this thesis possible. I will always be grateful to her for accepting me as a part of the department.

I would deeply acknowledge University of Grants Commission for providing financial support to me in form of RFSMS during the entire tenure of my doctoral studies. The timely gain of this fellowship would not have been possible without Prof. P. C. Mankodi. During his headship, he has always made the signing of documents very easy for me.

My academic transition from biotechnology to microbiology to zoology is solely because of Mr. Shashikant Sharma. He made my entry to this wonderful subject as well as department possible. I owe a lot to him for this. Other than being an insignificant neighbour, he is very meticulous in his practical work. I have learnt a few skills by just observing him the way he worked with chick embryos. Thank you a ton, Shashi (we still have many more pronunciations for this!).

My recommendation from Shashi was validated by my friend cum mentor cum mother. Though not biological, she has always showered a lot of love on me as a mother, Dr. Isha Desai. I feel so proud that I am your student and I enjoyed the process of transforming from just student to your bachha! After a hectic schedule, you still managed reading most of my thesis and correcting it to make it better. I am very grateful to you for you this, ma'am.

I would also like to thank my teachers who have always inspired me to pursue my career in this field. The knowledge I have gained from them has always come to my rescue at the time I need (specially interviews!). I thank Madhu ma'am, Yachana Ma'am, Kundan Sir, Amit Sir, Urvish Sir, Archana ma'am and Nerurkar ma'am for giving me in depth knowledge of various subjects.

I am thankful to my lab seniors, Dr. Hiral Murawala and Dr. Shailja Rajaram for providing positive environment to work in lab. I would like to thank Shailja ma'am especially for teaching animal handling and dosing in fish and most importantly for complementing my introvert nature. Another lab senior then, now friend, Pranav deserves a special mention as he helped me in developing scientific acumen and provoking the critical analysis of experimental outcomes. I am thankful to him for letting me bother him while his ongoing labwork. Scientific discussion (non-scientific too) have always helped me in understanding things in a better manner.

Special thanks to Dr. Mital Ravalji, with whom I could talk very comfortably during the initial days of my doctoral study in Prof. B. Suresh's Lab (PSL). I could learn a lot of new things during her thesis submission period which benefitted me later when I pursued my studies. I would also like to thank Gowri ma'am for all her help during my Ph.D. tenure.

Isha Ranadive (the junior Isha of our lab) is an extremely skilled, cheerful and hardworking person. The path from no one to very special is one of the most beautiful journeys of my life. The bridge from the title of the thesis to the concise summary was impossible without her. From the chapters of our theses to the manuscripts we worked on, all the time I thoroughly enjoyed your company.

I would like to thank Urja for all her help she extended to me. I admire her hard working nature and wish her all the best for a brighter future. Kashmira Khaire, the powerhouse of the lab, deserves a lot of applauses for her incredible energy she puts in for any work assigned to her. I admire you for all your qualities such as generosity, sincerity, dedication, willingness to help anyone which have contributed significantly ($p \leq 0.001$) to my thesis. I

wish you a very bright path ahead. I would also like to thank Bhaval, Harshita, Shweta and Neha for their help and support during the thesis submission phase.

The people mentioned above comprise a family called extended family (term coined by Dr. Pratyush Patankar). The address of this extended family is PSL. People join, stay and leave the home but the family tree keeps growing. PSL is considered as a second home as I and many with me have spent more than 12 hours in a day for numerous days. This home also deserves huge thanks as it has provided us the shelter as well as the warmth.

I thank Jitendra for teaching me science and conscience both. He is an excellent teacher and the best companion I could ever had. I am grateful to him for critically editing my manuscripts, all the chapters of my thesis as well as for making beautiful illustrations with lot of patience. Thanks a lot for bearing me all the time! My parents-in-law, Kanta Gusai and Pratappuri Gusai, who are the sweetest innocent children I would say in our family. Without their support, this thesis would have been impossible.

I feel blessed to be born as daughter of Minaxiben Patel and Pranlal Patel. Their love, care and above all the freedom they have given me have been my drive to take up this degree. They constant support has made me finish this thesis in time. My dee, Dhara patel has been the best sibling anyone would dream of! She is a gem who has always made sure that smile on my face does not fade away. I took up science stream just because of her. I am extremely thankful to her for this. My golu, Shaurya has made me feel special since he was born. I feel so lucky to have you in my life.

I would thank almighty to keep me blessed with much more than I deserve.

-Sonam Minaxi Patel