

Acknowledgements

Obtaining a PhD has long been a dream of mine. This dream could not have come to fruition without the support of many of my well-wishers to whom I shall remain eternally grateful. Here, I would like to acknowledge their invaluable support in aiding this achievement.

I wish to incorporate *Sahadharminī* (companion soul) and *Bandhu-Mithradhikal* (relatives and friends) into the classical quartet of support pillars – *Matah* (mother), *Pitah* (father), *Guru* (teacher), *Deivam* (God) – commonly attributed as reasons for one's success in ancient Indian scriptures such as the Vedas, Shastras, Charitras, Itihasas and Purāṇas. Whilst making this personal amendment, I would like to de-emphasise any connotations of hierarchy amongst these support pillars, since they all play equally important roles in one's life.

During these four years, the level of support accorded by my wife Parvathy Chittur Subramanianprasad cannot be described in mere words. She voluntarily shouldered all matters of responsibility in the family so that I could focus solely on my research. At this prime of her youth, she has sacrificed so many material comforts and happily lived a relatively austere life by humbly accepting the financial constraints that are part and parcel of a student's life. In the same vein, I owe a lot to my parents Shri Gopalakrishnan P. K. and Smt. Ananthalakshmi G. It has been ten long years since I departed Indian shores in pursuit of higher studies. During all those years, despite ill-health and missing my presence at home, they have always urged me to carry on and complete my studies. Many a time, I have experienced a hopeless sense of incompleteness due to my inability to fulfil the basic duties of a son towards his parents, the least of which is spending quality time with them. However, my parents have always brushed aside their physical and financial difficulties to put my success above everything else.

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Despite not having interacted much with her, the abilities of our beloved Manni Ammal from Chittur remind me that one should not be carried away by their achievements. In India, a female attending school in the pre-independence era, particularly in a rural Kerala village, is virtually unheard of. Not only did Manni top her high-school grades, she can reel off the Nobel-winning *Gitanjali* in fluent English, despite being hampered by the age-related afflictions of a nonagenarian. On the same note, I bow before the vast knowledge and humility of Shri Ramaswamy C. K. and Smt. Uma Sangameswaran which have endlessly inspired me.

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