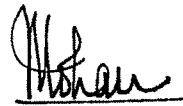


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I express my deep sense of gratitude to my teacher and research guide, Dr. P.K. Bhattacharya, M.Sc., Ph.D., for taking keen interest in this investigation and for the inspiration and excellent guidance throughout the progress of this work. The value of his contributions far exceeds what these words of appreciation can express.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V.B. Mohan Kumar', written over a horizontal line.

(V.B. Mohan Kumar)