

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the outcome of a long rigorous journey in which I have been encouraged and supported by many people. It is indeed a pleasant moment to express my gratitude for them. First and foremost, I thank my Supervisor **Dr. Shamsheer Bahadur Singh**, Professor & Former Head, Department of Civil Engineering, BITS-Pilani, Pilani Campus for giving valuable suggestions, enthusiastic help and constant encouragement throughout the progress of the present work. During my tenure, he contributed to a rewarding doctorate experience by giving me intellectual freedom in my work, supporting my attendance at various conferences, engaging me in new ideas, and demanding a high quality of work in all my endeavors.

I thank Prof. Souvik Bhattacharyya (Vice Chancellor, BITS-Pilani) and Prof. A. K. Sarkar (Director, BITS-Pilani, Pilani Campus) for allowing me to pursue my doctoral thesis. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. S. K. Verma (Dean, Academic Research Division) and Prof. Hemant R Jadhav for their kind support and encouragement. I would like to thank Prof. Ravi Kant Mittal (HOD, Civil Engineering Department, BITS-Pilani, Pilani Campus) for his kind moral support and assistance.

I would like to thank the member of Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC), Prof. Manoj Kumar, Associate Professor & Former Head, Department of Civil Engineering, BITS-Pilani, Pilani campus. I am really grateful to him for all academic support and for sparing his valuable time in reviewing my draft thesis. It has been such an enriching learning experience when he was the head of department. I also express my gratitude to another DAC member Dr. S.N. Patel, Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, BITS-Pilani, Pilani campus, for taking out time from his busy schedule and giving valuable comments and feedback on the thesis work that helped me to improve it.

I am also thankful to all eminent faculty members such as Prof. Rajeev Gupta, Prof. A. P. Singh, Dr. K. Kumar, Dr. D. Bhunia, Prof. Anshuman, Dr. G. Muthukumar, Dr. A. Goel, Dr. Bahurudeen and Dr. Shibani Jha for their support, insightful comments and suggestions during Ph.D seminars, which helped me to widen my research from various perspectives. I am also thankful to all non-teaching staffs such as Mr. Shiv Ratan Sharma, Mr. R. D. Soni, Mr. Om Prakash, Mr. Bhim Singh, Mr. Suresh Kumar, Mr. Shivpal and Mr. Kamal for their timely support.

The greatest gift of life is friendship and received it in the form of Mr. Pankaj Munjal, Mr. Rahul Dandautiya, Mrs. Aradhna Dantautiya, Mrs. Shweta Gupta, Mr. Jitender Malik, Mr. Makrand Wagale, Dr. Priya Gupta, Dr. Arun Nihal Singh, Dr. Satish Mohanty, Mrs. Anuradha Devi, Mrs. Nikita Sharda, Ms. Vidhi Vyas, Mr. Vummadisetti Sudhir, Mr. Harish Puppala, Ms. Sakshi Chhabra, Ms. Sandhya Rathee, Mr. Gaurav Kumar, Mr. Gourav Gill, Mr. Manpreet Singh, Mr.

Shaik Hussain, Mr. Nikhil Ghakkar, Mr. Sanjeev Jhakhar, Mr. Sourabh Sharma, thank you all for making a wonderful and enjoyable life at BITS Pilani campus.

Last but not the least, I am thankful to my entire family. My father Mr. Harish Kumar, who has been my strength and support throughout my life and My mother Mrs. Usha Katyal for her unconditional love and motivation. I dedicate my thesis to my beloved sister (late) Mrs. Kamini Khanna. I am lucky and blessed to have sister like her. I thank my wife Mrs. Meenakshi Chawla for her care and affection. My special thanks goes to my sweet and cute niece Ms. Soham Khanna for being the light of my eyes and the joy of my heart. I also would like to thank Dr. Navneet Khanna for his constant support and motivation.

Himanshu Chawla