TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Sl. No.	Contents	Page no.
Chapter 1	1	Introduction	1-11
	1.1	The backdrop	1
	1.1.1	Beneficial role	2
	1.1.2	Nanofertilizer: a new concept	3
	1.2	Major research gap and the research questions	4
	1.3	Aims and objectives	5
	1.4	Thesis organization	6
		Bibliography	8
Chapter 2	2	Review of literature	12-39
	2.1	Nanotechnology and nanomaterials	12
	2.2	Metal-based ENMs	12
	2.3	Metal-oxide NMs	14
	2.3.1	Silver NM	15
	2.3.2	Iron oxide NM	16
	2.3.3	Copper oxide (CuO) NM	17
	2.3.4	Magnesium oxide (MgO) NM	19
	2.3.5	Zn-oxide (ZnO) NM	19
	2.3.6	Ti-dioxide (TiO2) NM	20
	2.4	NMs in soil environment	20
	2.4.1	Agglomeration/Aggregation of NMs in soil	22
	2.4.2	Surface characteristics	24
	2.4.3	Dissolution and transport	24
	2.5	Bioaccumulation (mass concentration) of metal	25
		based NMs	
		Bibliography	30
Chapter 3	3	Methodology and planning of the experiments	40-57
	3.1	Experiments for silver nanomaterials	41
	3.1.1	Preparation of the material	41
	3.1.2	Fates of silver nanoparticles in soil-plant	42
		environment	
	3.1.2.1	Preliminary assessments	42

3.1.2.1.1	Silver nanoparticles-soil and plant interactions	42
3.1.2.1.2	GSNP-N interactions	42
3.1.2.1.3	Impacts on beneficial soil bacteria	44
3.1.2.2	In depth and long term study	44
3.1.2.2.1	Impacts on soil physico-chemical properties	44
3.1.2.2.2	Behavior of AgNP in aqueous media	45
3.1.2.2.3	On field trial with tomato	47
3.1.2.2.4	Impacts on earthworm health	47
3.2	Experiments for oxalate capped iron oxide	47
	nanomaterials	
3.2.1	Effects on soil beneficial bacteria (N-fixing and P	48
	solubilizing) and seed germination	
3.2.2	Impacts of OCIO on earthworm health and	48
	proliferation	
3.2.3	Lab scale batch experiments related to	48
	precipitation/dissolution dynamics in soil, pH	
	change and release of N, P, and K.	
3.2.4	Soil conditioning and plant growth promotion	50
	potential of OCIO: pot culture experiment	
3.2.5	Field experiment- Impact of large scale application	52
3.3	Quality assurance and quality control	52
3.3.1	Sample storage and preservation	52
3.3.2	Calibration procedure	52
3.3.3	Initial demonstration of performance	53
3.3.4	Linear calibration range (LCR)	53
3.3.5	Method detection limit (MDL)	53
3.3.6	Instruments and equipment's	53
3.3.6.1	Operations and maintenance	53
	Bibliography	55

Chapter 4	4	Plant extract mediated silver nanoparticles: overall toxicity analysis in earthworm-microbes-soil-plant system	58-173
	4.1	Introduction	58-60
	4.2	Material and methods	60-115
	4.2.1	Preparation and properties of silver nanomaterials	60
	4.2.2	Fates of silver nanoparticles in soil-plant environment	61
	4.2.2.1	Preliminary study: silver nanoparticles -soil plant interaction	61
	4.2.2.1.1	Assessment of physico-chemical changes in soil	62
	4.2.2.1.1.1	Bulk density	62
	4.2.2.1.1.2	Water holding capacity	63
	4.2.2.1.1.3	pН	64
	4.2.2.1.1.4	Available Nitrogen	65
	4.2.2.1.1.5	Available Phosphorus	66
	4.2.2.1.1.6	Available K	68
	4.2.2.1.1.7	Soil organic carbon	69
	4.2.2.1.1.8	Urease activity	71
	4.2.2.1.1.9	Phosphatase activity	72
	4.2.2.1.1.10	Soil respiration	73
	4.2.2.1.1.11	Cation exchange capacity	74
	4.2.2.1.2	Benefit percentage	75
	4.2.2.1.3	GSNP-N interactions	76
	4.2.2.1.3.1	Total N	76
	4.2.2.1.3.2	Nitrate content	77
	4.2.2.1.4	Plant health metabolism: pot culture with French	
		bean and tomato	79
	4.2.2.1.4.1	Pot study with French bean (P. vulgaris)	79
	4.2.2.1.4.1.1	Leaf number	79
	4.2.2.1.4.1.2	Leaf area index	79
	4.2.2.1.4.1.3	Pod yield	79
	4.2.2.1.4.1.4	Weight loss per pod	79

4.2.2.1.4.1.5	Uptake of N and P	80	
4.2.2.1.4.1.6	Chlorophyll		
4.2.2.1.4.1.7	Proline		
4.2.2.1.4.1.8	Crude protein		
4.2.2.1.4.1.9	Nitrate reductase activity	82	
4.2.2.1.4.1.10	Real-time quantitative PCR: expression of NR and	83	
	Fd genes		
4.2.2.1.4.2	Pot study with tomato (L. esculentum)	86	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1	Effect of AgNP on crop growth, photosynthesis,		
	hill activity, nutrient uptake, and Ag accumulation	86	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1.1.	Leaf number and LAI	86	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1.2	Yield	86	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1.3	N, P, K, and Ag uptake	86	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1.4	Chlorophyll content	87	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1.5	Photosynthetic rate	87	
4.2.2.1.4.2.1.6	Hill activity	87	
4.2.2.1.4.2.2	Assessment of oxidative stress in AgNP treated	87	
	plants		
4.2.2.1.4.2.2.1	Catalase activity	88	
4.2.2.1.4.2.2.2	Proline	89	
4.2.2.1.4.2.2.3	Lipid peroxidation	89	
4.2.2.1.4.2.3	Effect of AgNP exposure on nitrate reductase,	90	
	glutamine synthetase/glutamate synthase activity		
	and gene expression in tomato		
4.2.2.1.4.2.3.1	Nitrate reductase activity	90	
4.2.2.1.4.2.3.2	Glutamine synthetase activity	90	
4.2.2.1.4.2.3.3	Glutamate synthase activity	91	
4.2.2.1.4.2.3.4	qRT-PCR: gene expression of GS2 and GOGAT	92	
4.2.2.1.5	Estimation of bacterial growth in silver	92	
	nanoparticle treated soil samples		
4.2.2.2	In depth and long term study	93	
4.2.2.2.1	Soil spiked by AgNP	93	
4.2.2.2.1.1	pH	94	

4.2.2.2.1.2	Available N	94
4.2.2.2.1.3	Available P	94
4.2.2.2.1.4	Available K	94
4.2.2.2.1.5	Microbial biomass Carbon and Nitrogen (MBC	
	and MBN)	94
4.2.2.2.1.6	Urease activity	96
4.2.2.2.1.7	Phosphatase activity	96
4.2.2.2.1.8	DTPA extractable Ag	97
4.2.2.2.1.9	Sequential extraction procedures for speciation of	97
	particulate trace metal	
4.2.2.2.1.10	Available sulphate and sulphur	98
4.2.2.2.2	Behavior of AgNP in aqueous media	100
4.2.2.2.1	AgNP-pH interaction: batch experiment no. 1	100
4.2.2.2.1.1	pН	100
4.2.2.2.1.2	Ag content	100
4.2.2.2.2	N, P, K, and sulphur (SO_4^{2-} and S^{2-}) release profile	100
	and Ag ⁺ dissolution from AgNP: batch experiment	
	no. 2	
4.2.2.2.2.1	pH	101
4.2.2.2.2.2	Available N	101
4.2.2.2.2.3	Phosphate	101
4.2.2.2.2.4	Potassium	101
4.2.2.2.2.5	Sulphate and sulphur content	101
4.2.2.2.2.6	Ag content	102
4.2.2.2.3	AgNP agglomeration dispersion kinetics through	102
	dynamic light scattering (DLS) and UV-VIS	
	spectrum	
4.2.2.2.4	On field trial with tomato	103
4.2.2.2.4.1	Pilot study-germination test	103
4.2.2.2.4.2	Design of experiment- Field trial	103
4.2.2.2.4.3	Nursery, land preparation, and plot size	104
4.2.2.2.4.4	Treatment combinations	104
4.2.2.2.4.5	Soil sampling from the experimental field and	104

	physico-chemical assessment of the soil			
4.2.2.2.4.5.1	рН	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.2	Bulk density			
4.2.2.2.4.5.3	Water holding capacity	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.4	Available N	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.5	Available P	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.6	Available K	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.7	Soil organic carbon	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.8	Urease activity	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.9	Phosphatase activity	105		
4.2.2.2.4.5.10	Crop yield	106		
4.2.2.2.4.5.11	Shelf life in tomato	106		
4.2.2.2.5	Earthworm fecundity, body weight, Ag	106		
	accumulation, oxidative stress enzymes, and			
	histological analysis			
4.2.2.2.5.1	Catalase assay for animal sample	107		
4.2.2.2.5.2	Reduced Glutathione	108		
4.2.2.5.3	Glutathione Peroxidase			
4.2.2.2.5.4	Glutathione –S-Transferase			
4.2.2.5.5	Total protein			
4.2.2.2.5.6	Tissue preparation for histological studies			
4.3	Statistical analysis	115		
4.4	Results	116-156		
4.4.1	Preliminary assessment	116		
4.4.1.1	Impact of GSNP on soil Physical composition -	116		
	SEM, EDX, and XRD analyses			
4.4.1.2	Impact of various concentrations of GSNP and	118		
	CSNP on soil quality attributes			
4.4.1.3	Benefit percentage			
4.4.1.4	Lab scale batch experiments: Impact of GSNPs on			
	total N and nitrate leachability in soil			
4.4.1.5	Effect of GSNP and CSNP on pod yield, weight	123		
	loss of pod, leaf number, LAI, and uptake of N, P			
	of P. vulgaris			

4.4.1.6	Impacts of GSNP and CSNP on proline levels,	125
	crude protein content, chlorophyll content, activity	
	of nitrate reductase (NR) enzyme, and the	
	expression of mRNA for NR and Fd in leaves of P .	
	vulgaris under various treatments	
4.4.1.7	Effect of AgNP on pH, available N, P, soil	126
	respiration, activity of urease & phosphatase of	
	cropped soil under tomato cultivation	
4.4.1.8	Growth of tomato plant under AgNP treated soil in	127
	pot study	
4.4.1.9	Effect of AgNP on uptake of N, P, K, Ag, and	128
	yield of tomato seedlings	
4.4.1.10	Activity of glutamine synthetase (GS) and	129
4.4.1.10	glutamate synthase (GOGAT), nitrate reductase	
	(NR) and expression of GS2 and GOGAT gene in	
	leaves of AgNP treated tomato	
4.4.1.11	Oxidative stress, chlorophyll, photosynthetic rate	
4.4.1.11	(PS), and hill activity	130
	•	
4.4.1.12	Effects of SNPs on soil microorganisms	132
4.4.2	In depth and long term study	133
4.4.2.1	AgNP-pH interaction in soil and soil-less medium	133
4.4.2.2	Effects of AgNP on N, S, P, and K availability in	136
	soil and aqueous media	
4.4.2.3	Silver (Ag ⁺) release profile, agglomeration/	139
	dispersion dynamics, and interactions with other	
	elements in soil and aqueous media (N, P, K, and	
	S): DLS and UV-VIS confirmation	
4.4.2.4	AgNP and microorganisms: biomass, biomass C&	145
	N, soil respiration and enzyme	
4.4.2.5.	Correlation analysis	145

	4.4.2.6	On field trial with tomato	148
	4.4.2.6.1	Effect on seed germination	148
	4.4.2.6.2	Effect on pH, bulk density, water holding capacity,	148
		availability of N, P, K, soil organic carbon and	
		enzyme activity of field condition soil	
	4.4.2.6.3	Impact of AgNP on yield of tomato	151
	4.4.2.6.4	Effect of AgNP on shelf life of tomato	152
	4.4.3	Earthworm response to AgNP	152
	4.4.3.1.	Response of earthworm to AgNP exposure:	
		fecundity and body weight	152
	4.4.3.2.	Responses to earthworms on AgNP: oxidative	
		stress enzymes, Ag accumulation, and histology	155
	4.5	Discussion	157-162
	4.5.1.	The effects of SNPs on pH and cation exchange	157
		capacity (CEC) of soil	
	4.5.2.	Bio availability of N, P, K, S, Ag, and microbial	158
		health	
	4.5.3.	Effect of AgNP on plants	161
	4.5.4.	AgNP stress in earthworms	162
	4.6	Conclusion	163
		Bibliography	164
Chapter 5	5	Effect of oxalate capped iron oxide	174-243
		nanomaterials	
	5.1	Introduction	174-175
	5.2	Materials and methods	175-191
	5.2.1	Synthesis of Oxalate capped iron oxide	175
		nanomaterials (OCIO)	
	5.2.2	Effect of OCIO on beneficial soil bacteria (N-	176
		fixing and P-solubilizing) and seed germination	
		indices	

5.2.3	Effect of oxalate capped iron oxide nanoparticles on earthworm health and proliferation	177
5.2.3.1.	Earthworm count and body weight	177
5.2.3.2.	Super oxide dismutase (SOD)	178
5.2.4.	Fe release profile of OCIO in aqueous medium of various pH and the effect on P and N solubility	178
5.2.4.1	рН	179
5.2.4.2	N availability	179
5.2.4.3	Phosphate availability	179
5.2.4.4	Fe availability	179
5.2.5	Solubility experiment and application of	179
	geochemical model Visual Minteq	
5.2.5.1	рН	180
5.2.5.2	Total Alkalinity	180
5.2.5.3	Phosphate	180
5.2.5.4	Sulphate	181
5.2.5.5	Nitrate	181
5.2.5.6	Chloride	181
5.2.5.7	Spectrophotometric determination of Iron	182
	concentration	
5.2.5.8	Mg, Ca, and Mn determination	183
5.2.6	Soil conditioning and plant growth promoting potential of OCIO: Pot culture experiments	183
5.2.6.1	pH	185
5.2.6.2	Water holding capacity	185
5.2.6.3	Bulk density	185
5.2.6.4	Soil organic carbon	185
5.2.6.5	Available nitrogen	185
5.2.6.6	Available phosphorus	185
5.2.6.7	Available potassium	185
5.2.6.8	Microbial biomass carbon	185
5.2.6.9	Urease activity	185
5.2.6.10	Phosphatase activity	186

5.2.6.11	Fe content	186
5.2.6.12	Zeta potential & HDD	186
5.2.7	On-field trial: large scale application	186
5.2.7.1	Experimental site and soil quality analyses	186
5.2.7.2	Design of experiment	186
5.2.7.3	Nursery land preparation and plot size	187
5.2.7.4	Treatment combinations	187
5.2.7.5	Agronomic practices	187
5.2.7.6	Periodical sampling & physico-chemical	188
	assessment of the plant and soil samples	
5.2.7.7	Effect of OCIO on crop growth, photosynthesis, hill activity, oxidative stress, and expressions of vital enzymes and their genes	188
5.2.7.7.1	Glutamine synthetase (GS)	189
5.2.7.7.2	Glutamate synthase (GOGAT)	189
5.2.7.7.3	Nitrate reductase	189
5.2.7.7.4	Gene expression in qRT-PCR	189
5.2.7.8	Assessment of oxidative stress in OCIO treated	189
	plants	
5.2.7.8.1	Catalase activity	189
5.2.7.8.2	Lipid peroxidation	189
5.2.7.8.3	Super oxide dismutase	190
5.3	Statistical analysis	191
5.4	Results	192-225
5.4.1	Characterization and large scale applicability of the	192
	synthesized nanomaterial	
5.4.1.1	Powder XRD and FT-IR analysis	192
5.4.1.2	Morphology, surface and elemental analysis of the	193
	synthesized nanomaterial	
5.4.1.3	Oxidation states of iron: X-ray photoelectron	195
	spectral analysis	
5.4.2	Effect on soil beneficial bacterial diversity	196
5.4.3	Phytotoxicity: Effect on seed germination assay	197

5.4.4	Impacts of OCIO on earthworm health and	198
	proliferation	
5.4.4.1.	Earthworm count and body weight	198
5.4.4.2.	Oxidative stress, total protein, and Fe accumulation	199
	in earthworms:	
5.4.5.	Influence of the OCIO on pH and Fe release: a	201
	unique buffering capacity	
5.4.6	P, N, and Fe release and their interaction with pH	203
	in aqueous medium	
5.4.7.	Solubility pattern of elements in OCIO mixed soil	205
	through application of geochemical model visual	
	Minteq	
5.4.8	Effects of OCIO application in soil: pot culture	209
	experiment-I	
5.4.8.1	Changes in soil physico-chemical characteristics	209
5.4.8.2	Particle size (hydrodynamic diameter (HDD)), charge (ζ-potential), surface area, and cation exchange capacity (CEC) of OCIO spiked soil	213
5.4.9	Pot culture experiment-II: deficiency recovery potential	214
5.4.10	Field experiment: Impact on large scale application	217
5.4.10.1	Impacts on field soil fertility	217
5.4.10.2	Impacts on crop	220
5.5	Discussions	226
5.5.1	Environmental toxicology assessments: Impacts on	226
	earthworms, soil beneficial microorganisms and	
	seed germination	
5.5.2	OCIO and pH interaction: the buffering	228
	mechanism and nutrient (N, P, and Fe) availability	228
	dynamics	

		List of publications	
Chapter 6	6	Summary	244-247
		Bibliography	235
	5.6	Conclusion	233
	5.5.6	Plant health and productivity	232
		rich and deficient arable soil	230
	5.5.5.	Performance of OCIO as a soil conditioner in Fe	230
		diameter of soil	
	5.5.4	Impact on zeta potential and hydrodynamic	229
		anions in OCIO mixed soil	
	5.5.3	Impact on solubility dynamics of cations and	229