PREFACE

This is a paradox in India’s development. At a time when the country is giving serious thought to developing information technology, and going consumer oriented items for the interests of a minority group, the rural poor who constitute majority are deprived of their basic needs like drinking water, housing, employment, education, health facilities, etc. The basic human needs should get the highest priority in the process of development. Development should mean the development of all sections in all fields. The ideal of democracy will be well realised only then when it ensures the widest possible participation of the people in decision-making and planning for the country.

The literacy is the most potent factor so far as the social characteristics having deep bearing on the development of overall personality of an individual is concerned. Education is a term which is concerned with learning. Education is a key to development. Education is an effective tool for upliftment of an individual and society in every way whether it be personality development, social and economic development and so on.

In almost every developing country a great deal of emphasis has been placed on creating and strengthening infrastructure facilities. So a country’s economic and industrial development involves large-scale deployment of resources. The greater the urge of development, the wider the lag to catch up with and therefore the faster the pace of development, especially in the Third World. These countries, in a hurry as they are, know very well that the process of resource mobilisation and utilisation for the development of backward regions entails heavy sacrifices. But what is usually glossed over in this process is the involuntary displacement of huge populations for the sake of national development (Mahapatra, 1991). The problem is that the laws of many countries provide for the acquisition of land in the national interest, and the state is under no effective obligation to demonstrate the ‘public purpose’,
which is held to be necessary to justify the expropriation of people (Barutcisk, 2000).

The status of women in a society is a significant reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women’s status is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as the roles they play within the family, the community and society. A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic-structure of her society. The Dhebar Commission Report (1961) mentions that the tribal women isn’t a drudge or a beast of burden, she is found to be exercising a relatively free and firm hand in all aspects related to her social life unlike in non-tribal societies. The status of tribal women in matrilineal societies has been observed to be somewhat better than that of women in patrilineal society and they have a significant role in the tribal economy which goes unrecognised. However, after a comprehensive analysis of the various factors (literacy, health status, political participation, religion, ritual practices, etc.) among the different tribes of India, it has been observed that the status of tribal women is comparatively lower than that of tribal men. Moreover, the status of tribal women has gone from bad to worse due to lack of developmental initiatives on the part of government and its various departments.

There have been studies on the status of women relating to their socio-cultural problems, their economic rights, their access to health, education, employment, etc. But these issues haven’t been properly focussed in relation to the tribal women. There are only a few studies on the status of tribal women in India. In this regard, the study of tribal women becomes important because the problems of tribal women differ from a particular area to another area owing to their geographical location, historical background and the processes of social change. For this there is a need for proper understanding to their problems specific to time and place so that relevant development programmes can be made and implemented effectively. There is a greater
need for undertaking a region-specific study to the status and role of tribal women which alone can throw up data that will make planning for their welfare more meaningful and effective.

It is very strange that women who are contributing effectively in the growth and development of nations sharing variety of responsibilities are being discriminated at every level. They aren’t considered an equal partner in the process of development. There is a gender disparity in respect of education, health, employment, nutrition and decision making power. No doubt, Independent India has made various efforts to bring women into the mainstream of national development by enhancing their social, economic, legal and political status, but inspite of the constitutional and legal safeguards to protect tribal women against social discrimination, violence, and atrocities much needs to be achieved in this context. And still there is a large gap between theory and practice.

The National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE) regarded Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, women, minorities, handicapped and other educationally backward sections as the deprived groups needing special attention. The 1968 Education Policy Resolution called for a strategy of educational development to correct regional imbalances and minimisation of intra and inter-group disparities. Health services in the last few years have increased but the benefits from most of them have gone to the privileged sections of society and the health needs of tribal women are most neglected. As education and health are the most important indicators of human resource development, it is ironic that the tribal women are neglected in this regard on account of policy formulations and plannings in the efforts of the government and its various departments.

Unfortunately the primitive tribes of Orissa have relatively little or no access to even the most elementary form of health-care and education. Tragically enough, they are the very people who are in utmost need of health
care because they are the most vulnerable to disease and have high degree of morbidity and malnutrition. And it is the tribal women who are at the lowest rung of all kinds of development activities including education and health. As education and health are the most important indicators of human resource development. This thesis will assess the programmes and policies relating to health and education which are operating under the Government of Orissa for the development of tribal women. The main focus will be to see what post-independence development has done to improve the status of tribal women through various policies and programmes relating to health and education and its impact on them in the society at large. The study will also seek to find out the failure of policies and planning in tribal districts of Orissa.

The thesis is an attempt to assess the tribal development in general and the impact of health and educational policies for tribal in particular in the post-independence period. Despite the efforts made during the past 50 years through tribal development approach, the overall tribal situation hasn’t changed much. Though the status of tribal women of Orissa has been improved to a considerable extent, much needs to be done in this regard for their all round development.