PREFACE

Man and woman are the two integral parts of a single entity that is society, inseparable from one another. We cannot think of the creation in absence of one of them. For the last 80 years the world has been observing the International Women's Day on the 8th March of every year, yet to-day when we are nearing the end of the twentieth century, women are ill-treated, neglected, humiliated, insulted and burned. But if we go through the pages of the history of civilization we find the talents of women shown continuously in the fields of culture, literature, politics, administration, religion, service to mankind, science and social reforms. In the history of mankind celebrated women were not only affectionate mothers, and good housewives, they not only served their husbands as devoted wives and were worshipped as ideal women; they also looked after the administration of the country efficiently, they fought on the battle-field, went out to the outer space and showed their achievements in the fields of science, literature, art, architecture, music, dance, acting and the like. As such in all the ages women had an extraordinary role to play in the development of civilization. Orissa was no exception to this general run of things.

This work aims at presenting a historical exposition of the role of women in Orissa from the earliest times to
1568 A.D. This work may, however, be claimed as the first of its kind, as no attempt has so far been made to throw light on the participation of women in various fields in the history of this land. The study of the role of women in the history of this land is, in fact, a subject of great interest in view of their numerous activities in different fields of life. An attempt has been made in this work to project those dynasties who accomplished women living during their reign who contributed in some fields or other either in the political or in the socio-religious life of Orissa. It was the extremely charming Karuvaki belonging to the fishermen's community of Orissa who influenced the great emperor Asoka to be converted to Buddhist faith. It resulted in transforming Chandasoka into Dharmasoka, an event which changed the career of Asoka and brought about remarkable changes in the history of Buddhism.

Six widowed queens and a daughter of the Bhaumakara dynasty ruled this land as sovereign independent rulers, an uncommon event in the history of India. It was Kolavati-devi, the mother of Udyotakesari who built the Brahmesvara temple at Ekamra Khetra to the walls of which she affixed an inscription of 17 verses which gives an account of the rule of the Somavamsis in Orissa. Chandrikadevi of the Ganga dynasty built the famous Anantavasudeva temple at Bhubaneswar. Jaganmohini, a Suryavamsi princess was
sacrificed to maintain peace between Orissa and the Vija-
yanagar empire.

The present work "The Role of Women in the History of Orissa, from earliest times to 1568 A.D." is just an humble attempt at presenting the social, political, religious and sculptural history of the women of Orissa. The scope of the subject is very limited as the information available from the various sources is insufficient.

This work includes eight chapters. The introduction gives an account of the women in Orissa during the epic age. Chapter One deals with the women of Orissa as referred to in early Indian Literature. Chapter Two gives an account of women of Orissa from 261 B.C. upto the Guptas. Chapter Three enumerates the achievements of women as the sovereign independent rulers of the land. In Chapter Four an account of the women from the Somavamsi dynasty upto 1435 A.D. has been given. Chapter Five narrates the activities of women under the Gajapatis. In Chapter Six a detailed account of the women as depicted in Orissan sculpture is given. Chapter Seven analyses the role of women in the socio-religious life of Orissa. Chapter Eight deals with the costume, ornaments and coiffure of women of the period. At the end a conclusion has been given followed by an appendix of the photographs depicting the numerous activities of the women of Orissa.

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