Physical anthropologists and population geneticists study the biological differences and similarities between the human population groups in terms of genetic demography and genetic variation. Such population groups called in genetic terms as 'Mendelian populations', form fundamental units for scientific theory and investigation. In the genetic demographic studies fertility and mortality are essential factors responsible for the biological maintenance and survival index of that community. The past studies have been devoted to the study of the taxonomy and ethnicity of populations based on somatometric, mor-
phological and behavioural as also blood group markers. Later on, studies were made on dermatoglyphic variations, which played a vital role in the study of human population variation. The main objective of this type of studies is to trace the historical relationship between population groups on the basis of actual genetic relationship.

India is a vast country with numerous castes/tribes and religious groups living under varying ecological conditions. These groups characterised by different types of mating patterns due to ethnicity, religion, and tradition provide a laboratory situation for the study of biological differences of the population. The study of human biological variation will help us in understanding the nature and process of the ongoing evolution.

There are a large number of physical anthropological works conducted so far in India but these have mainly covered the tribal and urban populations. This holds good for Southern India too including the state of Andhra Pradesh where many works have been carried out
on tribal populations. Studies on demographic variables and genetic aspects like blood groups, dermatoglyphics, anthropometric and morphogenetic characters among the caste populations are scanty. To fill the gap in the knowledge on the above characters to some extent, the present work was carried out on two endogamous groups of Dhobis (Washermen) of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh (India). There are no previous physical anthropological investigations conducted on this population in Andhra Pradesh especially in Tirupati to the best of the author's knowledge. So the present work was undertaken to study the structural and compositional aspects of biology among the Dhobi groups.

The word 'Dhobi' used for the washermen of our study is derived from Sanskrit language. In view of its familiarity among all sections of India, the author has chosen to use it in the entire thesis for the sake of convenience. The thesis is presented in VIII chapters. The I chapter deals with the introduction covering scope of the topic of research, critical review of earlier works, the setting and the people and the objectives of the study. Chapter II describes the material and methods
of the problem. In Chapters III to VI, analysis, the results and discussion of the data on demographic, serological, morphobehavioural and dermatoglyphic characters of the study are given. The VII Chapter gives an account of the total biological variation and the last Chapter (VIII) ends with summary and conclusion.

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