PREFACE

Physical growth and development of man is a complex process. It is influenced by both genetic and environmental factors. The environmental factors include climatic, physical, biological, nutritional, socioeconomic and other living conditions of life. Comprehensive studies relating to human growth and its environmental correlates in the urban and rural population are available but such studies on tribal populations which constitute a distinct group and live in a variety of ecological settings are scanty. In India, the tribal ecology ranges from rainfed forest, desert and hilly areas to primitive agriculture. It is often hypothesized that more secluded are the tribals depending on natural food available in forest, better they are nutritionally. But the fact that their dependence entirely on nature exposes them to the uncertainties of food supplies and their primitive modes of health care and cultural practices, can be expected to adversely affect their growth pattern.

In order to study the prevalent situation and to test the above hypothesis a few selected tribal groups living in the State of Madhya Pradesh have been studied under the auspicious of the National Institute of Nutrition, (Indian Council of Medical Research), Hyderabad, as part of a larger project were (i) to assess health and nutritional status of tribal groups and their determinants and (ii) to suggest suitable strategies of intervention to meet the specific health and nutritional needs.

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staff. The National Institute of Nutrition had planned and executed the study. As an anthropologist and a senior member of the team, I was responsible for supervision of data collection, quality control, analysis and reporting. The data collected by this study has been used for this thesis.

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