Rural artisans play an important role in the context of rural industrialisation pursued under different Five-Year Plans. Orissa is principally an agricultural state. Nearly 80 per cent of the population in the state depend upon agriculture for their livelihood and occupation. However, agriculture has not very much contributed towards improving the material wellbeing of the people. On the other hand there is the growing incidence of poverty and unemployment in the state. This is more deep seated in the rural areas where the bulk of the population of the state reside. It is in this context that the development of village and cottage industries is mooted. The state has inherited a rich tradition of arts and artisan crafts developed since time immemorial. The artisan crafts and the products produced in these crafts have received wide appreciation in different parts of the world for their artistic design and durable quality. It is believed that with the development of artisan based units, the surplus population of agriculture will get ready employment and this will help them to improve their standard of living a lot. Besides there will be greater integration between industry and agriculture which would help to promote overall economic development in the countryside. However, the rural artisans in course of their operation have come across with certain problems. Of these problems, dearth of finance is one of the crucial bottlenecks. It is true that finance is essential but not a necessary condition for development. There are, of course, several activities, which need the finance most. Rural artisans are poor and they do not have adequate finance of their own. Accordingly they look upon external agencies for the supply of necessary funds. In this context the institutional credit agencies occupy a significant place. It
is against this background that the present study is pursued. With the active participation of institutional financing agencies, there has taken place large scale development of artisan based units at the state level. Rural artisans engaged in crafts like; Khadi and Village industries, Handlooms, Handicrafts, Coir unit and Sericulture have witnessed phenomenal growth of their units being actively supported by institutional financing agencies.

The study has its focussing attention on the district of Puri. Most of the artisan craft units located at the state level are found to be operating at the district level. Besides, the district has large scale concentration of artisan based units and rural artisans compared to other districts of the state. The presence of the temple of Lord Jagannath and the inflow of tourists in large number to the district have further contributed for the growing importance of artisan craft units in the district. However, the village and cottage craft units of the district lag far behind the performance of these units at the state level. There are a wide spectrum of institutional credit agencies operating at the district level. The size and magnitude of these institutions have increased considerably since the nationalisation of banks. Over the years, the supply of finance by these institutions have also expanded significantly. In spite of this, the rural artisans have not made significant improvement in their trade. Their poverty and low standard of living have continued to persist over the time. It is in this context that an humble attempt is made to analyse the role that the institutional financing agencies could play in developing and promoting rural artisans in the district. In other words the central idea of the present work is to analyse the role the institutional financing agencies is to play for the growth and qualitative
Improvement of rural artisans in the context of economic development of the district.

The study broadly covers eight Chapters, besides the introductory section which outlines the scope of the study. Chapter I discusses the role played by rural artisans in the context of rural industrialisation pursued under various plans. Chapter II gives a review of the socio-economic background of Orissa in general and Puri district in particular. This chapter seeks to identify the needs and requirements of rural artisans. At the same time it seeks to analyse the part played by institutional credit agencies in fulfilling these requirements. Chapter III described the institutional credit structure and operational policies adopted by credit agencies in the district. Chapter IV highlights the working and performance of institutional credit agencies in financing rural artisans in Puri district. Chapter V makes an analysis of the demand for and supply of credit with a view to assess the emerging credit gap in the district. The utilisation gap arising out of a mismatch between purposewise distribution of credit and utilisation of credit for the said purposes also forms a part of the discussion of this chapter. Chapter VI examines in-depth, on the basis of the field study, about the impact of institutional finance on the generation of output, income and employment by rural artisans. Chapter VII discusses about the problems encountered by rural artisans and institutional financing agencies in the course of their operation. Chapter VIII gives the summary of the discussions and suggests suitable policy measures for further improvement.

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