India is a country of villages. About 77% of the total population of the country still live in the rural areas which constitute more than 96% of its geographical area. A constant increase in the rural population has resulted in a number of problems in recent times. While in 1901, the rural population was 207.3 millions, it has gone up to 525.4 millions in 1981. This trend of increase in the rural population has also been confirmed in case of Orissa, which has chiefly resulted in the scarcity of agricultural land and inadequacy in other resources. These factors have given rise to the growth of small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, unemployment and rural poverty. This state of affairs has also resulted in large influx of rural migrants to the urban sector. As such, the fundamental need is the creation of conditions for healthy community life for the village dwellers by providing adequate welfare services through the adoption of various rural development programmes.

The Government of India have adopted a number of rural development programmes in course of its Five Year Plans in order to achieve rural development and to promote the standard of living of the rural inhabitants.
An important step in this direction is the nationalisation of major commercial banks in 1969 and associating such banks in implementing the development schemes in the rural sector.

To what extent the nationalised banks in India are involved in promoting rural development is a vital problem which has been studied at the national level by some scholars. But till now, no serious study of this problem in respect of the contributions made by the nationalised banks for the rural development in Orissa has been made. This is the reason which has prompted the author to take up a systematic study of rural development through the nationalised banks in Orissa with special focus on the role of such banks within the district of Cuttack, the most important district of the State.

The present study, in the context of the general pattern of the nationalised banks and rural development measures in India, deals with the operation of rural development programmes through the nationalised banks in Orissa with special reference to Cuttack district during 1969-84. The author has divided the study into nine Chapters.

In the first introductory chapter, the author
has dealt with the concept of rural development and various approaches to the study of rural development in India. In this context, he has made a short review of literature, chiefly the published and unpublished Ph.D. theses and other original research works, which could be available to him. He has also indicated the scope and objectives of the study; the hypotheses to be tested; the method he has adopted; the sample and coverage of the survey made; the respondents' structure; techniques of data collection and the process of data analysis.

The second chapter elucidates the origin and evolution of banking system in India and Orissa right from 1770s down to 1949, the year in which the Banking Regulation Act was enacted in order to consolidate the various laws governing the banks and the reorganisation of the banks thereafter till 1984. The author has also made an attempt to analyse the present structure and functions of the nationalised banks in course of this chapter. Special attention has been made to study the functions of the nationalised banks in relation to rural development with reference to their financial resources and their relationship with the Central Government and the Central Bank.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of
the concept of rural development, its evolution and the dimensions. Here the author has also tried to show the nature and objectives of different rural development programmes in India with reference to their progress in Orissa.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the study of the profile of the area under the survey. Here the author has attempted to show the geographical location, historical background, economy and demography of Orissa with special focus on the district of Cuttack and the sample blocks as well as the villages. The operation of the nationalised banks and rural development programmes within the study area has also been highlighted.

The fifth chapter analyses the problem of identification of the beneficiaries, the institutional arrangements made for achieving rural development and the linkages existing among those institutions within the district of Cuttack.

The deployment of credit forms the theme of the sixth chapter. Here the author has shown the importance of credit in rural development and the amount of credit deployed under various rural development schemes through the banks within Cuttack district during 1969-84. The utilisation of credit and their recovery have also been
focused during the course of author's analysis.

The seventh chapter is concerned with the analysis of socio-economic impact of rural development programmes within the district of Cuttack during 1969-84. Here the author has attempted to show the dimensions of improvement in the economic and social conditions of the beneficiaries under different rural development schemes. The author has also analysed the change in social status of the rural people who adopted the development schemes with the financial assistance from the nationalised banks.

The eighth chapter elaborates people's participation in rural development programmes. The concept of participation has been highlighted in terms of people's awareness, interest and involvement regarding the rural development process within Cuttack district.

The last chapter presents the conclusion on the findings of the author in relation to the hypotheses formulated. This chapter also sets forth the suggestions emerging from the study for removing the shortcomings on the way of rural development and achieving greater success in rural progress through the nationalised banks.

As far as practicable, the analysis given in the various chapters has been illustrated with a number of
tables, diagrams and graphs. For the analysis of the problem, the author has taken individual as well as cumulative figures at the end of every five years depending on the availability of data during the period between 1969 and 1984.

In pursuing a study of this kind, the author has tried to make use of both the primary and secondary sources. In order to know the views of the persons who availed the loans from the nationalised banks for adopting rural development schemes and the bank officials who were associated with the implementation of such schemes, the author has collected through survey method 300 samples from Cuttack district.

In course of analytical study of the subject, the author has encountered several problems, namely, absence of an established information centre on bank sponsored rural development programmes, absence of systematic records and data on the subject in different government and bank offices, disparity in the year-wise data documentation between the government offices and the banks and non-availability of required data relating to the nationalised banks.

Despite the above limitations, the author has made an humble attempt to study the problems of rural development through the nationalised banks in Orissa.

(PURUSOTTAM BISWAL)