SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

I.1 Situated in the Trans-Himalayan zone, Zanskar remained a remote and isolated region till 1974 when it was opened for tourism.

I.2 Zanskar witnessed a number of changes in the past decade in terms of its traditional way of life largely due to widening territorial linkages and commercialisation of the economy.

I.3 There is as yet very limited written material relating to the process of man-environment interaction and socio-economic conditions in Zanskar. This study attempts to fill this gap so that the man-environment processes are understood and development measures can be viably implemented.

I.4 On the basis of altitude and the physiography, three sub-regions of Zanskar can be identified. These are the Stot valley with 8 villages, the Central plain with 10 villages and the Lunak valley with 7 villages.

II.1 The natural environment of Zanskar is characterised by high altitude mountainous topography where approximately 88 per cent of the land surface is elevated above 4,000 metres and mostly unused by human exploitation and endeavour.

II.2 Land lying below 4,000 metres that can be used for cultivation is limited mostly to alluvial fans and river
terraces where the soil depth and water availability
determine its suitability for cultivation.

II.3 The climate is harsh with extreme arid-cold conditions.
II.4 There are no forests or mineral and fuel resources
in Zanskar.

II.5 The natural environment thus provides a limited
resource base for exploitation through human activities.

III.1 The population has adapted to the conditions of
a limited resource base through the institutional structure
based on the tenets of Tibetan Buddhism.

III.2 Customs like polyandry primogeniture and monasticism
that limited population growth evolved in consonance
with the limited production possibilities.

III.3 The distribution of population is sparse with an
average density of 14 persons per 10 square kilometres,
spread mostly in the Central plain and lower Stot valley.

III.4 The limited resource base and prevalent social
customs resulted in a low growth of population till 1960.
In the last two decades the population has grown very
rapidly due to changing socio-economic conditions especially
in the Central plain.

III.5 The dynamics of the age-sex composition of population,
show a trend of declining sex ratio and large proportion
(53 per cent) of young population aged below 24 years. This denotes some inmigration to selected villages and the rapid growth of population.

III.6 Literacy levels for males are comparatively high in some hamlets largely due to the 'literate' lamas. The provision of schools has also contributed to raising literacy levels within settlements.

IV.1 Settlements in Zanskar evolved primarily as semi-closed units. Most settlement sites depend on the availability of cultivable land and water.

IV.2 The distribution of settlements follows a linear pattern along drainage lines with clustered settlements in the Stot valley and the Central plain and dispersed in the Lunak valley.

IV.3 Settlement morphology and building materials show a close consonance with the natural environment.

IV.4 In terms of the functional hierarchy of settlements, Padam and Karsha are the highest order settlements followed by 5 second order settlements and 18 third order settlements.

IV.5 The network of transport linkages is very weak especially in the Lunak valley.

V.1 The response of human activities to the harsh environment is reflected through the subsistence level agro-pastoral economy.
V.2 The land-use pattern shows that approximately 42 per cent village area is cultivated, 26 per cent is not available for cultivation and 32 per cent is culturable waste.

V.3 The occupational structure brings out the great importance of primary activities, employing 93 per cent of the total workforce. Most non-primary workers are based at Padam in the Central plain.

V.4 Most cultivators in Zanskar are owner operators, a few are tenants of different monasteries and some are joint owners.

V.5 The size of farms is generally very small with 73 per cent farms being below 5 acres in size.

V.6 The major crops cultivated include barley, wheat, peas and alfa-alfa for fodder. Some vegetables are now being cultivated as well.

V.7 Sample control plots indicate that the average yield of wheat is about 1,200 kgs per acre and of barley is 1,000 kgs per acre. Demonstration plots with more inputs show higher yields indicating the possibility of improving productivity levels.

V.8 Livestock resources are very important in Zanskar and their products - milk, butter, meat, wool and skins are indispensable to the way of life.
V.9 The major limiting factor to increasing livestock numbers is the lack of fodder during winter when natural pastures are not available due to below freezing temperature.

V.10 Non-primary activities were traditionally limited to small-scale weaving and some leather and metal work.

V.11 These have decreased in importance following the import of industrial commodities. The most important non-primary activity in Zanskar post 1974 is the service sector geared to tourism, as it provides maximum monetary profits.

VI.1 Within the traditional network of linkages, the key components were the population, the environment (land and water resources), agriculture and livestock resources. The influence of change is reflected through better mobility and the provision of amenities.

VI.2 In terms of agricultural levels of development, four hamlets in the Central plain have the highest values, while most hamlets in the Stot and Lunak have low values.

VI.3 In terms of livestock, the Lunak subregion emerges as the most developed in Zanskar.

VI.4 Population characteristics are most developed in the Central plain where Padam emerges as the most important village.
VI.5 Proximity to the road linking Padam with Kargil has been primarily responsible for better levels of mobility in the Stot valley and Central plain.

VI.6 The distribution of amenities brings out that most higher order functions are located in the Central plain dominated by Padam.

VI.7 Padam emerges as the only village to fall at a very high level when the effects of agriculture, livestock, population, mobility and amenities are composited. The next order settlements – Karsha and Lungmi – are also located in the Central plain.

VI.8 This brings out the need for selecting some settlements like Phe and Ichar in the other two subregions so that higher order functions can be provided in these hamlets. This will reduce disparities within Zanskar and lead to more equitable development in the spatial context.