CHAPTER - XI

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

11.1 Land in Purba Medinipur District is under severe stress. In land potentiality assessment variations in properties of land are well marked. Most of these variables are relatively permanent in nature. These permanent properties act as a stumbling block to any economic development of the district. The most alarming situation is noticed in the coastal regions of the district. Owing to coastal location this region is subjected to a number of weather aberrations and environmental hazards. These natural problems are further complicated by cultural activities of the people. Pedo-geomorphologically the land of this region is comparatively better than most of the areas of the district. But the quality of life of the people of this region is very poor. Therefore land potentiality alone can not ensure better sustenance of life in the study area.

11.2 The inter block differentials in the standard of living of people of the district emanate from the differences in the land potentiality, irrigation achievability and lack of accessibility to other forms of employment. From the analysis it is reflected that due to the availability of irrigation, people of the very poor land potential areas are economically better placed as compared to most of the fair and poor land potential areas of the district. Exploitation of potential of land in the coastal regions is restricted due to lack of physical as well as cultural constraints. These constraints limit agricultural expansion of the concerned region. On the other hand, non-farm activities which have immense scope for employment generation are poorly developed and remain underutilized and untapped. Due to
lack of irrigation system in the coastal regions potentialities of land are untapped. In such a situation, land, their ultimate asset, their only means of sustenance, is underutilized and misused. So apart from land potentiality quality of life of the society of the district depends on several other institutional and infrastructural factors.

11.3 Letting nature to take its own course is impossible here. To improve the condition of the people of the district quantitatively and qualitatively the first and foremost strategy would be to minimize the effects of flood and water logging which act as major impediments to exploitation of land potentiality. Taming floods are impossible here but its severity can be checked with proper precautions. The Ex-Zamindary embankments are obsolete and in bad conditions. Regular maintenance and repair is needed in every rainy season. Lack of proper and adequate drainage facilities has been responsible for water stagnation in most of the blocks of the district. In this respect desiltation of the canals and khals should be carried on regularly.

11.4 As the land is a shrinking resource for agriculture in the district and the scope for horizontal expansion of the cropped area is limited, greater reliance has to be placed on vertical expansion of the cropped area through creation and utilization of irrigation systems in the coastal regions. Coastal regions receive large amount of rainfall in the district. Care should be taken to conserve this water by digging tanks in most of the blocks of the district.

11.5 Diversification of agriculture is another crucial area for employment generation in the district. Instead of being preoccupied with food grains,
diversification into non-food grains like horticulture, floriculture and pisiculture (in the context of blue revolution) would be a viable option for the upliftment of society. The district makes a valuable location for investment in horticulture and processing sector. The major advantages include a large domestic market, man power at much lower cost and above all there is a large scope for developing marginal and poor land potential areas which are hardly suitable for economic cultivation of field crops. As this sector offers high financial returns and more job opportunities in rural areas emphasis should be given on post-harvest horticulture infrastructure facilities. The shift from traditional subsistence agriculture to less diversified cash cropping is likely to mean more vulnerability through market fluctuations, poor conservation facilities and pests and diseases risks associated with mono cropping. Thus exposure to hazards is growing. In such circumstances soft loan schemes to the marginal farmers should be provided in an efficient manner. Monitoring on linkages between producers, processors and marketers should be carried on, whereby poor marginal producers could be provided with assistance from the exploitation of the middleman. As the district is a hazard prone areas of West Bengal insurance coverage to these commercial crops should also be provided.

11.6 The importance of developing coastal fishery lies in the fact that they can act as substitute to poor land resources of the district. Owing to coastal location Purba Medinipur District has a vast potential of sea fishing resources. High priority should be given continuously to the development of fisheries with adequate facilities of nets, boats and supply of diesel and spare parts of engines to the needy fishermen. To
exploit marine fish resources facilities like processing, preservation (as it is a perishable commodity) and marketing of fish should be provided.

11.7 Aquaculture presented a golden opportunity to usher in a revolutionary change in the life of the coastal villages. An undisguised craze for striking "aqua gold" runs high in the district as is evident from the mushrooming of shrimp farms in a haphazard manner. What is most alarming is that most of the shrimp farms have been set up on fertile lands. Because of its high financial return there is an unabated spree to buy fertile lands for conversion to shrimp farms, ignoring the dangerous consequences for ecology and biodiversity. To combat indiscriminate spread of such farms stringent laws should be implemented. The criteria for selection of shrimp farms has to be mainly based on physico-chemical properties of soil, land use pattern and water quality parameters. Only barren and fallow lands on the coastal stretch should be used as brackish water fisheries. Marking of buffer zones between farms should be followed to provide enough space for developing discharging system. To be family based and labour intensive, these shrimp farms can be used by unemployed youth or small and marginal farmers in coastal villages with supply of seed, feed, technology and credit, and also help in marketing the produce.

11.8 As a service industry, tourism has a flexible character, having capability of accommodating people- skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. Amidst a basically agrarian economic situation of the district tourism industry should be seen and designed as complementary seasonal economic activity to the traditional economic activity agriculture. Interestingly quality of facilities and services for tourists is polarized in a
couple of pockets of the region, restricting horizontal expansion of tourism industry in the district. Proper campaigning of the region's wider variety of physical and cultural products can certainly bring a dramatic change to the socio-economic base of the coastal regions. Proper planning and effective implementation is essential for the development of the tourism industry in the blocks like Contai-I and II and Khejuri-II blocks if the benefits of tourism to local areas are to be optimized. These four blocks have enormous explorable touristic resource base. In a resource crunch district like Purba Medinipur it is desirable that the multiple economic benefits of tourism be spread as widely as possible.

11.9 Thus, it can be concluded that apart from farming activities, non-agricultural employment generation, known as "deagrarianisation" (Bryceson, 1997) should take place on a long term processes involving occupational adjustments on the basis of local available resources, income earning orientation, social identity transformation and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly peasant modes of livelihood.