CONCLUSION

Bureaucracy as a pervasive pattern of administrative functioning came into being with the rise of capitalism. In India, it came into existence as an indispensable instrument for the British for governing a vast empire that lay at a very long distance from the ruling country.

However, of late a feeling of dissatisfaction with the administrative set up has been gaining ground in a large section of the society. It is being argued that an administrative machinery like this which has rarely been able to meet public requirements satisfactorily should not be accepted. Another point which has been debated in India and abroad is whether the same old pattern of bureaucracy as conceptualized by Weber should continue even when the socio-political conditions have changed considerably. Thus at the macro level there is little doubt that the system has some lacunae. But the question is what and where the alterations should be made? Theoretical postulates proposed by Weber seem to suggest that informal interaction should be kept at the minimum if the organisation wants to reach the ideal state. In practice, however, it is rarely possible. Perfect elimination of human factors is not possible even in a military organisation. Besides, recent approaches proposed by many management scientists emphasise on developing a
healthy and informal pattern of functioning in the organisation so that the organisation is not considered as a non-stimulating environment by the functionaries. This could be one of the ways of getting the best of human resources within the organisation.

Through the present piece of research we have tried to study the nature of interaction and functioning which actually exists in the present bureaucratic set up. The functional and dysfunctional attributes associated with the existing interaction pattern and method of functioning have also been analysed in the light of the model proposed by Weber, and those being propagated by later sociologists and students of public administration and management.

In the industrial set up it has been found that despite structural similarities organisations differ considerably from one another due to such factors as population of groups, interaction networks etc. Time and again it has been pointed out by sociologists and others that bureaucratic functioning in India is very different and more complex than what it is in other countries. In addition to the unique shaping influence of its colonial history, contemporary bureaucracy in India is subject to certain peculiar economic and political pressures. Thus it seemed worthwhile to probe into the pattern of interaction among the bureaucratic personnel, as perceived by functionaries themselves.
The specific objectives of the study were:
(a) to examine the socio-economic background of functionaries; (b) to identify, if any, the differences in interaction patterns, perceptions and attitudes of administrative personnel at different levels of hierarchy; (c) to understand the nature and pattern of communication in the system; and (d) to probe into the dysfunctional aspects of bureaucratic functioning as perceived by the functionaries.

The sample of bureaucratic personnel taken for intensive study was constituted of the functionaries belonging to all the four categories, namely Class I, Class II, Class III and Class IV. Responses on various aspects of interaction patterns and attitudes were elicited from all Class categories. However, with regard to those aspects of bureaucratic functioning in which the Class IV employees had no significant role to play, it would have been futile to question them. Naturally, the responses of Class IV employees regarding such administrative aspects were not sought and analysed. Administration, development, health and social security services were the specific areas taken up for intensive study.

Most of the data were collected with the help of an interview schedule. However, in order to get a deeper insight into the real pattern of interactional attitudes, I carried out many long unstructured interviews with the
personnel at different levels. I stayed in the offices for long hours and had the opportunity to observe many things first hand. Information was obtained also from sources such as official records, files, etc. Some of the findings and observations based on the analysis are being discussed below.

As regards the socio-economic attributes of the functionaries this study strengthens the previous observations which suggest that bureaucratic set up in India is not a representative one. It is weighed heavily in favour of the upper and middle strata of the society.

In the upper and middle rungs of the hierarchy a larger proportion of functionaries belong to the urban background whereas towards the lower levels of hierarchy, rural background is more pronounced.

In terms of occupational particulars, the study reveals that as many as three-fourths of the functionaries in Class II and Class III were either not promoted at all or were promoted only once. In Class I category promotion appeared to be more frequent. Thus it seems that down the hierarchy, the promotions become slower and at higher levels there are greater opportunities of promotion.

Transfers were more frequent among Class I and Class II and were less frequent among Class III. Class IV employees are usually not transferred. They are transferred only in special circumstances. This policy
of frequent transfers of the officers is apparently not appreciated by Class I and Class II personnel. Such transfers have an upsetting effect on their lives. The transferred officer has to arrange many household matters afresh after being transferred. It is interesting that among Class III and IV functionaries also there was a general feeling of resentment against the transfers of Class I and II officers. Their grudge was that the officers go away after doing and undoing many things, and the staff who do not get transferred had to bear the consequences and were often held responsible for being a party to such matters.

Procedure and functioning of bureaucracy was analysed in terms of hierarchical structure, nature of work and progress, procedural devices, decision making and procedural bottlenecks that come in the way of bureaucratic functioning.

Most bureaucratic organisations have one thing in common, i.e. the maintenance of official files and documents. Decision making and action taken is communicated and recorded on the files. How efficient the system is, does not always depend upon the movement of files; but the slow and fast movement of files does give an indication of the pace of functioning of departments.

The functionaries of all the categories said that when a file moved quickly this was because of political
pressures, urgency of work, personal interest of someone involved in the administration, or because of some time limit. In the course of informal discussions it was brought out that quick movement of files under political pressure could rarely be associated with a higher level of efficiency. The politicians feel that they have greater power and control than the administrators, and they tend to interfere in administrative functioning. It is noteworthy that among officials of all the categories a large number resented this kind of interference.

Among the reasons given for fast movement of files, time limit and sympathetic attitude of the officials can be regarded as related to higher levels of efficiency.

Slow movement of files was attributed to various factors such as passing the buck to others, no fixed quota of file work, slackness on the part of officials, personal factors and lack of interest among the staff. The amount of work sorted out by the officials every day was not in the same proportion as that received by them. There remained a considerable amount of backlog.

Though rules and regulations guide and control administrative functioning, the amount of flexibility contained in them provides enough scope for irregularities and inefficiency in the system. The revealing aspect of the present data is that there are neither any well
defined procedures of work nor adequate mechanisms of control for bringing about a definite pattern of functioning in any office. This apparently causes a lot of inconvenience to the functionaries as well as to the general public who are at the receiving end. Files remained pending for a long time unless the functionaries received pressure from the top or were sincerely sympathetic towards beneficiaries. However, at times the delays become inevitable even without the fault of officials. These delays became unavoidable when the officials were over-worked or were not clear about the case or the relevant rules.

In order to get an idea of the job satisfaction of the functionaries at various levels, they were asked about the degree of variety in their work. It emerges from the findings that there is considerable difference in perception of the functionaries of different categories. The highest proportion of respondents who found variety in their work were in Class I. Less variety was perceived by those in Class II and this proportion was still lesser among those belonging to Class III.

The actual manner in which cases were dealt and the amount of control exercised, were also investigated through interviews with functionaries at various levels. In this also the opinions expressed by officials of different levels in the hierarchy i.e. Class I, II and III varied considerably. This difference seems to stem
from the fact that Class I officers do not want to give the impression that they prevent their subordinates from expressing their views freely and frankly by telling them beforehand how they wish particular cases to be handled. On the other hand, officials at the lower levels felt that their superiors wish to get from them the type of notes which would suit them (the superiors); and this was done through discussions prior to the recording of their own opinion on the files by the subordinates.

In normal administrative practice, discussion with superiors is called for in those cases which need immediate action. Factors such as 'officers noting', 'rules not clear', 'personal interest of the officers' also lead to prior discussions. Actual decision making appeared to be a function of both the factors: (a) the type of boss that one has; and (b) the nature of the case or the file.

In the course of interviews it was brought out that level jumping is more common with some officials than it is with others. Detailed information about level jumping also revealed that when there are too many levels in the hierarchy, it becomes too time consuming to discuss matters with officials at all the levels; and then the files do not cover their usual circuit but tend to jump levels. Level jumping is also done when officers' personal interest and/or political pressures are involved. However, by and large the data on decision making revealed
that in most cases decisions are taken by the top people in the hierarchy and the lower levels have an insignificant role to play.

As regards the opinion on the corruption prevalent in the functioning of bureaucracy, more than three-fourths of the functionaries admitted that the system is not free from such practices. Among the kinds of corruption prevalent in the system are acceptance of sumptuous gifts, presentations and bribes; ignoring prescribed rules and procedures; utilizing government facilities for personal work; and getting unduly influenced by ministers and other powerful people. However, despite the prevalence of these forms of corruption it would be wrong to presume that the entire system is corrupt. It has been clearly stated by the respondents that some of the officials do not indulge in such practices and there are yet others who do not themselves appreciate these things and keep a strict watch on the rest of the officials so that they are prevented from taking to such practices.

When the responses of the Class I officers are analysed, the following emerge as the most important causes of corruption: structural strains (societal), structural strains (administrative), and moral weakness. Class I officers did not give much importance to economic deprivation as a cause of corruption. However, Class II and III officials emphasised economic deprivation, together with structural strains as the root causes of corruption.
The data on the interaction pattern between superiors and subordinates reveal that many functionaries from Class I and III could manage to keep aloof from their superiors. But in Class II category none of the functionaries could afford to ignore or keep aloof from his superior. All of them maintained a kind of close and workable relationship with their superiors. This suggests that the officials of Class II category find themselves placed in a more critical situation, and it becomes necessary for them to maintain a workable relationship with their superiors.

As far as the superior to subordinate relationships are concerned, the interaction is surely restricted by Class position. The bosses are conscious of their position end like to maintain some distance from their subordinates. Personal relationships between superiors and subordinates do develop but usually these are meant to serve the personal interests of the officials.

It were officials of Class I and II among whom personal and informal get togethers were more frequent, rather than those of the Class III category. Regarding social calls, the findings show that by and large social visits among the vast majority took place whenever they were required. There was no regularity in maintaining social contacts. Although social contacts were not totally absent among the functionaries, they were not found to be very close personally and socially.
The Class II officers, however, seem to be more prone to have close contacts with their superiors — but this may be related to the nature of their administrative responsibilities. On the one hand they have to take important decisions on the spot, and on the other they are always answerable to their Class I superiors. Thus they are compelled to keep the latter in good humour, also through informal contacts; and they have to cultivate personal relations with their superiors.

Responses concerning the disadvantages of personal relationships with the subordinates mainly emphasised that this encourages discriminatory treatment in the departments— some officers are favoured and others are ignored. Another disadvantage associated with personal relationship was that superiors expect their subordinates to do even out of the way work, and take advantage of the juniors.

Officials belonging to Class I and Class III expressed overwhelmingly a preference for verbal communication, whereas more than fifty per cent of those belonging to Class II prefer written communication in their routine work. This does not mean, however, that preference for written communication is totally absent in those belonging to Class I and III. Respondents of all the three class categories felt that work efficiency is enhanced through oral communication. Nevertheless, the advantage seen in written communication was that the views expressed become part of official record and can be checked back upon.
Factors associated with structural strains and tensions involved in the nature of work impinge upon bureaucratic functioning; and therefore mutual trust among the employees is necessary for congenial atmosphere in the office. The data on this aspect revealed that such ideal state of coordination did not exist in the set up. Functionaries admit that some of the officials are trusted more than the rest.

The study also reveals that in all Class categories seeking favour from the officers is not an uncommon practice among the subordinates. And very often the officers do not mind granting out of the way personal favours to their subordinates. This suggests that perhaps there is something in the present bureaucratic functioning which encourages such practices.

An interesting aspect of bureaucratic functioning is bureaucratic relationship with the members of the public - how do the members of the public approach them and whether the functionaries make themselves approachable or not? Responses elicited on this aspect reveal that the procedure adopted by the officials of Class I and Class II is more formal than what it is of those of Class III. The officers of Class I and Class II usually require the persons who wish to meet them to send their names on slips of paper and to come inside their room only when called or to fix up prior appointments. The Class III officials do not observe any such practice.
This difference probably exists because while the officers at higher levels like to maintain some distance from members of the public, the officials at lower levels do not usually do so.

Different kinds of consciousness appeared to influence the dealings of the functionaries with the general public. Most of the respondents of all the three Classes agreed that in dealing with the members of the public, the status of the member of the public comes into play. This shows that all sections of the general public do not get an even handed deal from the administrative set up. While some people are favoured, others are in a position of disadvantage. Among those who get advantage were those who had some authority and financial status in the society. Political status of the members of the public also affects the functionaries' dealings.

Interaction pattern at horizontal level provided enough evidence for the hope that potentiality of creating greater informality and friendly relationship depended upon the personal qualities of the officer. By and large peer group relationships depended upon the personality of the individuals concerned.

An attempt was also made to study the attitudes of the functionaries about some of the structural and functional attributes of bureaucracy. Regarding the desirability or otherwise of strict observance of rules and regulations, two different opinions have emerged.
Some have commended this as being conducive to organisational efficiency, whereas others have criticised it for involving so many formalities that at times strict observance of rules and procedures becomes a pretext for slackness and inefficiency.

Bureaucracy by its very pattern provides less opportunities to the subordinates to criticise the policies and decision making of the superiors. We tried to find out the extent of discontent in this regard among the functionaries. About one half of the functionaries felt that the practice of criticism should be encouraged since it has some advantages. Among the advantages mentioned were that it provides feedback to the superiors, improve efficiency, and gives a feeling of belongingness to subordinates. Criticism of superiors was not favoured for three specific reasons. These were: (a) it stimulates and strengthens the tendency of groupism; (b) it is against bureaucratic norms; and (c) it hurts the sentiments of the superiors. It needs to be mentioned in this context that though the necessity of criticism has been felt by a substantial proportion, in practice it is quite difficult to promote healthy criticism as most of the superiors are not used to accepting any feedback coming from below.

Further the responses revealed that a vast majority of Class I, Class II and Class III officials thought that bureaucratic functioning cannot improve unless an objective method of monitoring and evaluating performance was devised.
There was a difference in the attitudes of the officials of the three categories regarding the handling of pending work. Functionaries in Class II and III appeared to be less serious about handling delays as compared to those of Class I. This may be because the Class I officers had a greater sense of accountability and responsibility and were more aware of the consequences that slackness can have on the overall functioning of administration.

The need for recognition of good and hard work was emphasized by the functionaries of all the categories, and the proportion of respondents expressing such opinion was the highest in Class I.

Political interference in bureaucratic functioning was resented by most of the respondents. A common strategy for dealing with cases involving political pressure was to direct them to their bosses. This was done by about one half of the respondents of all the three Class categories. It was a general feeling that though bureaucracy can be considered a powerful and efficient system, it has proved to be inefficient under present conditions as too much of corruption has got into it and the functionaries have become selfish and indifferent towards public welfare.

The conditions in contemporary India pose problems that are in many ways far more complex than those faced by the Western society. Among such problems a very critical problem has been the problem of the Scheduled Castes and
Tribes. Attempts are being made for their uplift but these are being opposed at various societal levels. The functionaries' views about protective discrimination in favour of the personnel belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes have also been studied.

The findings in this regard show that more than one half of the functionaries do not support the policy of reservation in services. It is remarkable that this unfavourable attitude is more pronounced among the officials of higher categories. What is even more remarkable is the finding that personnel of Class IV, that is the government employees of the lowest level, favoured reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the largest numbers; and even those respondents of Class IV supported it who themselves belonged to the higher castes.

The analysis of responses in this regard brings out that the reasons given for not being in favour of reservations were that: (i) deserving candidates do not get a fair chance because of this policy; (ii) by encouraging reservations, inefficient and underqualified people get into jobs and the work suffers; (iii) this policy goes against the principle of equality; and (iv) it benefits only a selected few among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes who in all probability have already been benefitted by it, and those who are really backward do not get any real benefit from the policy of reservations in governmental jobs.
About the work efficiency of the personnel belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also there appeared to be a general discontentment among the functionaries. A large number of the functionaries considered them less efficient as compared to the rest. Viewing this aspect objectively one finds that there could be two reasons for this. One of these is that a substantial proportion of such personnel are really inefficient because they have been backward for generations and therefore are not used to handling administrative work as efficiently as others. Alternatively, this perception could be the result of the bias against the lowest castes which is widespread among the upper caste people.

Based upon the observations made in the present study and those made earlier some suggestions can be made. These suggestions may have some significance from the point of view of administrative reform and future researches to be conducted in this direction. The suggestions are being made with a view to enhance bureaucratic efficiency and minimise the conflicts that exist among the various Class categories, and create a potential for developing a positive attitude towards organisational functioning which would involve developing a healthy interaction pattern and a congenial atmosphere for the development of administration.

It is not really necessary to accept the Weberian model to the latter. What needs to be done is to adopt a more flexible and pragmatic system suitable to the present
democratic pattern based on the guidelines proposed by Weber. As far as the structural variables are concerned, the Weberian model has more advantages to offer than disadvantages. Yet problems arise when the functional attributes come into play. In the Indian context the system of delegation of authority will have to be specially improved. When the subordinates are expected to follow the decisions blindly, and implement new rules and regulations without being provided any understanding of the reasons behind them, this can lead to communication gaps between the class categories. It can leave subordinates with a feeling of discontent and indifference. Various administrative maladies such as slackness in the movement of files, unawareness of policies and lack of interest in the clients' welfare become a part of the system. Thus, though the authority is vested in superiors, constant efforts should be made to discover new possibilities of stimulating, encouraging and utilising the subordinates' knowledge and sense of responsibility. Superiors should be made aware of the fact that any genuine feedback coming from the subordinates should be appreciated. This would also imply expanding the delegation of authority not just on papers but in actual practice.

This aspect is closely linked with the status consciousness among different class categories which ultimately drives a wedge between the superiors and the subordinates. Clear norms of work which specifically
bring out the functional roles and responsibilities of all the four Class categories should be worked out. This will help in reducing frictions based on status consciousness among different Class categories.

A serious problem of Indian administration is the amount of corruption which has got into it. Corruption has become so much a part of the system that functionaries at all levels see no point in denying its existence. There are enough indications to suggest that it is prevalent in all Class categories. This problem has become so endemic that it cannot be remedied overnight. For rooting it out cooperation has to be extended by the functionaries as well as beneficiaries, because it is based on give and take between the two. Besides this, the roots of this problem lie in the fact that economic strains are so acute that they are motivating the beneficiaries and functionaries to opt for such malpractices. Thus the real solution of many problems lies in an overall change at the societal level.