CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the functioning of local bureaucratic system and its adaptation to the development goals within the framework of panchayati raj in Rajasthan. This is sought to be done by using the conceptual tools of role analysis. It is argued that the legal-rational model of bureaucratic organisation developed by Max Weber fails to provide an understanding of the environmental and motivational factors that shape and influence the way an organisation grows and functions. In the context of a developing reality what is important is not so much how a system has been ideally conceived, but how it actually works and what problems are faced by the actors in the realisation of systemic goals. This study is an attempt to examine the actual functioning of bureaucratic organisation through a detailed analysis of the actions and roles of interacting actors -- officials and political leaders in the present context. The study was carried out in four districts and twenty blocks in Rajasthan, covering a sample of 148 officials and 110 political leaders engaged in the agriculture development tasks, at both the district and the block levels.
2. In order to understand the situational and contextual factors impinging on the local administrative system, an attempt has been made to trace its growth from the period of feudal rule, through the phase of bureaucratic mobilization under community development, to the system obtaining today. Such an analysis of historical and environmental contexts has provided important clues in understanding the present behavioural manifestations of the various actors.

3. The manner in which the environmental factors bear upon the organisation through individuals performing defined roles has been subjected to different kinds of analysis. The individuals who join an organisation have their life histories, goals and aspirations which influence the organisational setup, its functioning and goals. With this in mind, we analysed the social background of the officials and political leaders. It was found that political leaders and officials come from diverse social origins. For instance, the fathers of officials were relatively better educated and were largely engaged in white collar jobs and professions, whereas fathers of the political leaders were in business and agriculture. But economically the fathers of political leaders were better off compared to the fathers of officials. Further, intra and inter level comparison of the two groups suggested that district leaders and officials came from relatively better off families than their counterparts at the block level.
4. Besides family background differences between the two groups were noticed in respect of their personal attributes like age, caste, education, income, rural versus urban exposure etc. The officials were by and large younger than political leaders: about 50 per cent officials were below thirty five years of age whereas barely 13 per cent political leaders were in that age group. However, the caste composition of the two groups was almost the same (60 per cent of both officials and political leaders belonged to higher castes and a majority of district positions, both administrative and political, were held by higher castes) the officials had spent a longer part of their life in urban areas as compared to political leaders who had lived largely in the countryside. Both district leaders and district officials had, as should be expected, greater urban exposure as compared to their block counterparts. The officials were by and large more educated than political leaders. The district political leaders, however, showed better educational attainment than the block leaders.

5. The political leaders depended largely on agriculture as their means of livelihood although a sizeable number of district leaders were engaged in legal practice. On the whole, however, political leaders were economically better off than the officials. District officials and district
political leaders had better economic status as compared to their block counterparts. Thus, on the whole, a good deal of diversity was found between officials and political leaders. But intra and inter level comparison revealed that whereas there was a good deal common in the backgrounds of officials, political leaders differed in their backgrounds across levels. The district leaders had more in common with the district officials than the block leaders had with the block officials. These similarities and differences in the social backgrounds of officials and political leaders, and across levels, did influence their attitudes and orientations. Thus, it was found that there was greater unanimity on several attitudinal and behavioural items between district and block officials who had similar social backgrounds as well as between officials and district level leaders, but not so much between block and district level leaders whose backgrounds varied a great deal.

6. Apart from the social background factors, we examined other components of the environment in which actors have to function. The role individual actors are called upon to perform is institutionally defined and is to a large extent influenced by the very nature of the organisation in which the roles are located. In reality, however, the formally conceived structure of the organisation is transformed by the way roles are perceived, accepted and actually
performed, and norms are operationalised and enforced. To get at this dimension and in order to find out how the local administrative system actually works and what deviation and departure it shows from the blueprint designed for it, we have examined both the formal or normative and the informal or operational aspects of the organisation. The following gaps were discovered in the local administrative system, as revealed by an examination of the perceptions and evaluations of the role incumbents.

(i) The local administrative system of panchayati raj is formally conceived as a unified and integrated system for the fulfilment of development goals. But in reality there were three clearly identifiable autonomous and independent sub-structures: the cooperative network, the panchayat, and the revenue, the agriculture and the cooperative departments, each pursuing its goals, cross-cutting and undermining the autonomy of other.

(ii) Since the sub-structures are not fully interrelated and their activities not properly coordinated, it has given rise to situations of role confusion and rendered certain roles dysfunctional for the operation of the total system.
(iii) Panchayati raj, which was conceived as the main politico-administrative framework at the local level for decision-making and implementation suited to local needs and resources, has in effect not developed as an autonomous system. The local political leaders have not been able to mobilize local resources whereas the government has gradually withdrawn substantial material resources which were earlier made available to them. Lack of resources in the panchayats has hempered popular participation. Moreover, bureaucratic compulsions of target achievement have oriented administrators to pay more attention to targets rather than to promote and foster popular participation in decision-making.

(iv) Although the officials have been placed under the administrative control of the political leaders, in the absence of the authority of the latter to enforce their decisions through an appropriate system of rewards and punishment the former continue to look to their superiors at higher levels of the bureaucracy rather than follow the instructions of the political leaders. Local officials, therefore, either feel ambivalent and confused or, in the case of the "hard-headed" ones, openly owe their allegiance to their superior officials than to the political leaders.
7. Apart from these structural gaps affecting bureaucratic performance, the local officials also find the administrative mechanisms to be unsupportive. For instance, a majority of them indicated that important decisions are delayed at the higher levels causing delay in execution and implementation, and that there are no incentives for good work and limited scope for personal initiative. All of these affect motivation and morale of the officials and consequently their identification with organisational goals and their performance. The officials also observed that they lacked authority to control their subordinates. Therefore, they have a tendency to get around the normal structure and count the favour of either higher level officials or influential political leaders, in the process undermining prescribed official channels, resulting in the breakdown of the local administrative system. The officials also argue that adequate cooperation from political leaders and the people at large, which is vital for their performance in a democratic polity, is not forthcoming. Political leaders were also found to interfere in the work of the officials by exerting pressures for accommodating all kinds of demands, at times involving violation of rules and regulations. When officials yielded to such pressures, it seriously impaired the effectiveness of the system and damaged their image.
and self-esteem. That all this is experienced more by block level officials who have to work in partnership with political leaders for the realisation of developmental goals than at higher levels is a cause for concern.

8. We also examined the normative referents and role perceptions of the officials and political leaders. Our data suggested that both the officials and political leaders found many of the rules redundant as they merely added to paperwork. Contrary to common belief, we found that even the officials were not guided by prescribed rules in their behaviour, a majority of them mentioning that they preferred to be flexible about rules. Relatively speaking, more block officials found the rules futile and consequently prone to be flexible about them, as compared to their district counterpart. Although a majority of officials claimed that they were flexible about rules, political leaders did not find that to be the case. Political leaders themselves, however, displayed double standards. While in some cases they ignored rules for solving certain problems, in other cases they advocated strict adherence to them even if it delayed implementation of development programmes.

9. In a situation where rules had low salience and even officials are flexible about them, they tend to show
"upward deference". Our data confirmed this. For instance, 84.4 per cent of the officials did not like to incur the displeasure of their superiors. Since the future of the officials depended on their relationship with their superiors, they were keen to keep them pleased and did not bother much about the political leaders. 72 per cent of the officials did not mind taking a decision which might displease political leaders and a still larger number (96.4 per cent) chose to be guided by the advice of their superiors rather than of the political leaders in case the instructions of the two were contradictory. At the normative level, however, the officials felt obliged to carry out the decisions of the elected bodies. But this did not mean that they were willing to undermine their own autonomy and freedom and submit themselves to popular will. For instance, a majority of them did not feel obliged to take action against subordinate officials at the instance of political leaders or change a policy decision on the advise of leaders. Both the block and district officials exhibited lot of similarity in their orientations to normative referents and role perceptions. This was, however, not the case with the political leaders. A good deal of incongruence was observed among them across levels.
10. In so far as interrelationships between officials and political leaders were concerned, the former were largely inclined to consult the latter but only a few were willing to be guided by their advice. The problems in this area were openly manifested as there existed a good deal of incongruence in the perceptions of officials and political leaders regarding the respective spheres and boundaries of their activities and authority. Whereas a larger number of officials thought that broad policy decisions were jointly taken, the political leaders contended that such decisions were largely taken by them alone. But there was good deal of consensus between officials and political leaders on several decisional items mainly falling in the jurisdiction of officials, excepting recruitment and transfer of staff, in which political leaders did exert their influence. On the whole, it was evident that a clearcut division of functions and allocation of responsibilities was not recognised by the participating actors. Thus a lot of confusion and ambiguity was observed between the two groups across levels regarding the location of primary responsibility for decision making in various functional areas. In other words, it was evident that in reality, the actors tended to violate the role boundaries, in the process overstepping the functional areas of one another.
11. It was further observed that so far as the officials were concerned, a majority of them considered that the political leaders mainly worked in the interest of their supporters and caste fellows and did not pursue wide interests of the community. However, political leaders denied this assertion. A majority of them contended that they mainly pursued general rather than parochial and partisan interests. It is interesting to note that when they wanted to get things done by local officials, the political leaders often exerted pressures through their superior officials. This view was endorsed by the officials also. In order to counteract these pressures, the officials by and large relied on their skills and experience in the use of administrative devices rather than on political support. The political leaders were, however, of the view that officials used both administrative and political support to counteract the pressures exerted on them.

12. On the whole, the relationships between officials and political leaders were marked by tension as they did not strictly confine to their jurisdictions and overstepped into the functional areas of one another. Furthermore, the officials who are expected to work in the wider interest of the community as a whole, regardless of the party in power or local pressure groups contended that in
reality the political leaders expected them to work in the interest of certain social and political groups. These contradictory expectations from the role incumbents created situations of role conflict and consequent tensions within the system.

13. The findings reported above lead us to the following broad conclusions. Firstly, the officials who are a homogeneous social group have developed an equally homogenous set of attitudes and orientations. This was underscored by a widespread consensus among them on normative referents, in role perceptions, and also in their actual behaviour. But the political leaders who are a heterogeneous social group manifested a great deal of diversity in their attitudes, orientations and actual behaviour. However, the district leaders have relatively more in common with officials than with the block political leaders. This is partly explained by their shared social characteristics and consequently shared attitudes and orientations with the officials—much more than with the political leaders at the block level. Since the two actors within the system have diverse attitudes and orientations, they have been unable to develop unanimity of purpose and identity of goals. In the absence of this commonness of purpose, the actors represent different interests and pursue different goals. This results in tensions and conflicts within the system.
14. Secondly, the local administrative system, fragmented between three sub-systems (the cooperative network, the government departments and the panchayat institutions), has not emerged as a unified system with well demarcated goals and clearly defined role boundaries of various incumbents. This lack of clearcut demarcation of functional areas of various sub-systems has created problems of cooperation and coordination within and between units, resulting in under utilization or at times waste of human and material resources.

15. Thirdly, the local administrative system, which was conceived as a autonomous system for initiating, planning, organizing and executing welfare and developmental programmes in response to local needs and resources, has not in fact evolved as a self-sustaining system — largely owing to non-availability of material resources. The human and material resources which were placed at the disposal of panchayat samitis by the state government in the initial stages of panchayati raj have since been withdrawn, without their being able to develop alternate avenues of resource mobilization. Lack of resources has created a feeling of powerlessness among the political leaders and thereby inhibited and even frustrated their initiative and involvement in the local administrative system. Indifference on the part of higher level political
leaders has failed to evoke their interest and mobilise their support for development programmes and thereby defeated the very purpose of the panchayati raj.

16. Fourthly, there is the problem of duality of control. The officials are supposed to work under the command of the elected representatives and at the same time carry out the instructions of their departmental heads. This duality of control exposes them to situations of role confusion and role conflict, since the two sets of actors display diverse orientations and pursue different interests and goals. Also, the officials, who are expected to work under the administrative authority of the political leaders, have not developed the necessary predispositions for this, and hence continue to owe allegiance to the superior officials in the administrative hierarchy. In effect, the political leaders are unable to regulate the behaviour of the officials working under them since they have few real sanctions to apply. In brief, the authority of the elected representatives has not been legitimised in the local administrative system.

17. Fifthly, apart from role conflict and role confusion, the officials have low morale and motivation which could be attributed to a variety of factors. (1) The support structure (both material and psychological) that is necessary for efficient role performance of officials has not
emerged. (ii) The political leaders and people do not show enough responsibility in realising developmental goals and hence do not extend the necessary support and cooperation in implementation of the programmes. On the contrary, it has been observed that they tend to interfere with the work of the officials, exert pressures on the officials for fulfilling parochial and partisan interests, and do not allow them to put in sustained work for the achievement of systemic goals. (iii) The officials have little opportunity to utilize their own skills and experiences and hence lack the incentives for good work as it is not likely to open up opportunities for better future prospects.

18. Finally, the legal-rational norms which have guided bureaucratic performance for long have become largely inoperative. For in the democratic set-up the bureaucracy has also to perform other roles. The new norms and values consistent with the goals of a decentralized local administrative system, which involves participation of people's representatives in bureaucratic functioning and the acceptance of economic development as the system's goals, have not yet emerged. Thus there exists what could be termed as "transitional anomie" which accounts for the tensions in the system.