Chapter - I - INTRODUCTION

1.1 The concept of bureaucracy

The term 'bureaucracy' has become a commonplace vocable today. We often speak of the emergence of bureaucracy in government offices, in private firms, in educational institutions and so on. It is imperative to have a clear understanding of this concept before further probing into the subject. In the language of Max Weber, "The body of officials actively engaged in a 'public' office, along with the respective apparatus of material implements and the files, make up a 'bureau'." The word 'bureaucracy' literally means the rule of bureau.

Again, in the opinion of P.M. Blau and M.W. Meyer, bureaucracy refers to those large-scale organizations which seek to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by way of coordinating the works of many persons. They point out that although bureaucracy is based on principles which are congenial to the improvement of efficiency, bureaucratization to the contrary quite often produces inefficiency.


M. Crozier reflects on three different meanings assigned to the term 'bureaucracy' in social sciences. He is very categorical in pointing out the vagueness of this concept and the resultant confusion. In the first sense, bureaucracy is government by bureaus, that is, by departments of the state staffed by appointed and hierarchically organized functionaries who are ultimately subservient to a sovereign authority. In the second sense which is popular among the sociologists, bureaucracy is a developed form of organization based on impersonal rules and it aims at rationalization of collective activities. The third sense denotes the derogatory use of the term 'bureaucracy' in common parlance. It stands for ponderousness of the structure, slowness and routinisation of operations, complication of procedures, incongruity between the needs which bureaucracy should meet and the actual bureaucratic functioning, and the frustration of the officials and the clients. In Crozier's analysis of the different meanings of 'bureaucracy', we find a happy blending of the etymological definition of the term (being commonly used in the domain of Political Science and Public Administration) and the sociological and popular usages of the term, the latter two having

proximity to the analysis of the meaning of the term by Blau and Meyer.

In Sociology, the term 'bureaucracy' has close link with another term -- 'organization'. T. Parsons, A. Etzioni and some other sociologists have preferred the word 'organization' to 'bureaucracy'. N.P. Mouzelis has defined organization "as a form of social grouping which is established in a more or less deliberate or purposive manner for the attainment of a specific goal". In modern sociological literature, these two terms are often used interchangeably, and often bureaucracy refers to the administrative apparatus of an organization. However, it should be noted that the structural aspects of an organization pertain to the domain of Public Administration, while the relational aspects persisting within the organization comes under the purview of Sociology. Hence, the term 'bureaucracy' appears to be less problematic to use than the term

7 Ibid., p. 42.
'organization'. However, as it will become clear subsequently, the present discourse on bureaucracy cannot remain confined to the discussion of bureaucracy (viewed in the sense of administrative apparatus of the organization) only; it cannot but incorporate discussion on organizational aspects also.

In Sociology, the study of bureaucracy generally emphasizes upon the study of the relational aspects persisting within the administrative apparatus of the organization and bureaucratic functioning in the context of wider societal influences. Bureaucracy operates within the context of the entire society and it is exposed to the influences exerted by the society upon it. Bureaucracy becomes subject to different pushes and pools. Bureaucratic dynamics can be viewed as the interplay between the aforesaid relational aspects and the outer influences.

Bureaucratisation means the emergence of bureaucratic characteristics the details whereof will be outlined in the following sections. Bureaucratisation as a process exhibits itself in various degrees in different organizations. While most of the government organizations have historically been sharply bureaucratised, there are organizations which need greater dynamism and flexibility and place lesser emphasis on hierarchy of authority and rules. Consequently such organizations
are less bureaucratised, an example of this kind being research and development laboratories. The following figure will illustrate variation in the degree of bureaucratisation in different organizations.

<table>
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<th>Absence of bureaucratic characteristics</th>
<th>Research &amp; Development Laboratory</th>
<th>Educational Institution</th>
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<td>Characteristic</td>
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1.2 Essential characteristics of bureaucracy

1.2.1 The basis of classification

An attempt has here been made to classify the works of different sociologists on bureaucracy. The basic features of bureaucracy, as highlighted by the sociologists belonging to different groups, have also been analysed here. Three such groups have been identified --

(1) the classical writers, (2) the non-empirical functionalists, and (3) the empiricists.
In the category of the classical writers, there are the authors who sought to examine the impact of bureaucratic functioning on the structure of society or the power relations within society. Karl Marx and Max Weber were two such authors. Adopting broad approaches, they built grand theories in this sphere of study. Incidentally, these two scholars were also the first two notable writers on this subject.

Among the non-empirical functionalists, mention should be made of Robert K.Merton and Talcott Parsons. In point of time, their existence was in between the classical writers and the subsequent empiricists. They also provided the necessary link between the grand theories of the classical writers and the micro-level studies of the subsequent empiricists. Both were functionalists and both refrained from undertaking empirical studies. Their approach, while being more diffused than that of the subsequent empiricists, was narrower in scope and outlook than the classical writers.

The empiricists took the clue from their earlier writers and engaged themselves in field-works. While there are so many empiricists, only a few have been selected as representative figures, and their views on the features of bureaucracy have been analysed. However, there are some empiricists who give
more premium on other aspects of the organization, say the sociological determinants of the level of productivity of the employees at the plant, than on the bureaucratic structure of the organization. Although their studies form a part of the organizational literature, those are not very relevant for the present study. The views of such authors have deliberately been omitted from the present discussion.

1.2.2 Bureaucracy as viewed by the classical writers

Among the two classical writers mentioned earlier, Karl Marx's approach was a unique one since he examined bureaucracy as a part of the state power structure. But while Marx made only a passing reference to bureaucracy in his discussion on class and class-struggle, Weber dealt with this subject in minute details and built his ideal-type model of bureaucracy.

To Marx, the interest of bureaucracy is closely linked to that of the dominant class in society. The real task of bureaucracy in a capitalist society is to consolidate and perpetuate class division and domination. But bureaucracy, not being an integral part of the capitalist class, also possesses a certain degree of autonomy which it often tries
to assert against its masters. This conflict cannot exceed the limits imposed by the existing forces and relations of production. In the opinion of Marx, bureaucracy is viewed by the majority of people as a mysterious and distant entity which regulates their life, but is beyond their control and comprehension. It is an oppressive force in the face of which one feels helpless and bewildered. The bureaucrats also simultaneously create special myths and symbols which sanctify and mystify their positions. Thus, bureaucracy becomes a closed world with its secrets and prerogatives, appearing to offer silence and hostility to the outsiders. But bureaucracy also seeks to hide its real purpose from itself. More often the bureaucrat fails to realise the parasitic and oppressive nature of his job. He thinks himself as the guardian of the general interest. Strict hierarchy and discipline maintained within bureaucracy and the bureaucrat's veneration of authority consolidate this self-illusion. Marx has also stressed the incompetence of the bureaucrat, his lack of initiative and imagination, and his tendency of shirking responsibility. Marx has exposed the 'sordid materialism' of bureaucracy; the bureaucrats' mutual struggle for promotion, their careerism, and their excessive
preoccupation with status and prestige symbols. Marx hopes that with the advent of a classless society, the state and bureaucracy will wither away.  

The ideal-type formulation of bureaucracy by Max Weber requires elaborate discussion. Weber dealt with this subject at length and systematically outlined the characteristics of a perfect model of bureaucracy which, according to him, is a most rational form of organization.

1. Weber explains his concept of "bureaucratic authority" which consists of the following three principles:

(a) The regular requisite activities of the bureaucratic structure are systematically distributed as official duties.

(b) The officials have sufficient authority to give command for discharge of such duties. Their authority is delineated by rules concerning application of coercive measures.

(c) There is methodical provision for fulfillment of their duties and execution of corresponding rights.  

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9 Gerth and Mills, eds., op.cit., p.196.
2. Weber also elaborates the rational principles on which the structure of bureaucracy is organized. Those are as follows:

(a) "The organization of office follows the principle of hierarchy; that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one."\(^{10}\)

(b) Operations are governed "by a consistent system of abstract rules . . . and consist of the application of these rules to particular cases."\(^{11}\) "The management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learnt. Knowledge of these rules represents a special technical learning which the officials possess."\(^{12}\)

(c) Management of the office is based upon written documents (the files) which are preserved in their original or draught form.\(^{13}\)

3. The position, rights and obligations of the bureaucrat have been enumerated in details by Weber.

11 Ibid., p. 330.
12 Gerth and Mills, eds., op. cit., p. 198.
13 Ibid., p. 197.
(a) The bureaucratic personnel are recruited on the basis of technical qualification or prescribed and special examination. Their service is protected against arbitrary dismissal. "The official normally holds tenure."  

(b) "It / service in the bureaucracy / constitutes a career. There is a system of 'promotions' according to seniority or to achievement, or both."  

(c) "The official receives the regular pecuniary compensation of a normally fixed salary, and the old age security provided by a pension."  

(d) "Legally and actually, office holding is not considered a source to be exploited for rents or emoluments, as was normally the case during the Middle Ages and frequently up to the threshold of recent times."  

(e) The office is entirely separated from the private life of the official in all respects -- place of stay, activities undertaken, properties used etc. "The official work is entirely

15 Henderson and Parsons, trans., op.cit., p.334.
16 Gerth and Mills, eds., op.cit., p.203.
17 Ibid., p.199.
separated from ownership of the means of administration and without appropriation of his position". 18

(f) "When the office is fully developed, official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be firmly limited. " 19

(g) "The ideal official conducts his office ... /" in a spirit of formalistic impersonality, 'Sine ira et studio', without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm." 20 "Its specific nature . . . develops the more perfectly the more the bureaucracy is 'dehumanized', the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation." 21


(a) "The fully developed bureaucratic mechanism compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with non-

18 Henderson and Parsons, trans., op.cit., p.334.
19 Gerth and Mills, eds., op.cit., p.198.
mechanical modes of production."  

"Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization ... is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency."  

(b) "Once it is fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are hardest to destroy .... And where the bureaucratization of administration has been completely carried through, a form of power relation is established that is practically unshatterable,"  

The essence of the above characteristics is the creation of a rationally ordered structure based on rules, impersonality, authority and technical knowledge with the aim of generating maximum efficiency. But, while the domination of rules restricts any arbitrary action on the part of the bureaucrat, there is not much room for initiative and discretion. "In the great majority of cases he [the bureaucrat] is only a simple cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march."  

22 Ibid., p.214.  
23 Henderson and Parsons, trans., op.cit., p.337.  
24 Gerth and Mills, eds., op.cit., p. 228.  
25 Ibid., p.228.
bureaucratise in modern world coincides with the decrease in individual freedom.

Not only this. It is true that elaboration of precise rules restricts arbitrariness on the part of the bureaucrat. But too much control of procedural details of bureaucratic activity by specific rules seriously reduces the initiative of the bureaucrat and ultimately leads to rigidity and inefficiency of the whole organization. The domination of rules as well as the prevalence of other characteristics of the ideal type bureaucracy, therefore, do not always make the bureaucratic organization efficient; rather they contribute to its inefficiency.\(^\text{26}\)

Moreover, the ideal type characteristics are not always compatible with each other. Such mutually incompatible features, when present in a particular bureaucratic organization, become the source of friction and inefficiency. T. Parsons\(^\text{27}\) and A.W. Gouldner\(^\text{28}\) show an inherent contradiction between

\(^{26}\) Nicos P. Mouzelis, *op.cit.*, p. 47.
the authority of hierarchical position and the authority of technical knowledge. The former is administration based on discipline while the latter is administration based on expertise. In the ideal type model both features are present, but their eventual conflict is ignored.

Weber's emphasis only on the formal organization implies that all deviations from these formal characteristics are detrimental to administrative efficiency and irrelevant for the student of organization. But Blau and Meyer think that informal relations and unofficial practices gradually assume an organized form even without official sanction. These unofficial patterns have significant bearing upon official operations and often contribute to efficiency in administration.29

Weber's analysis of bureaucracy is a functional one wherein a social structure is explained by showing how its elements contribute to its persistence and effective functioning. Too much insistence on efficient functioning of the structure, however, entails the danger of neglecting the disturbances that different elements bring forth in the structure. Thus,

the social structure appears to function more smoothly than it actually does and the disturbances in the structure are neglected. Hence, it is imperative to extend the analysis beyond mere consideration of functions.\textsuperscript{30} R.K. Merton provides the necessary impetus in this regard by putting stress on the dysfunctions, that is, the consequences which interfere with adjustment and create problems in the structure. In the opinion of Merton, Weber stated only what the bureaucratic structure could attain and neglected "the internal stresses and strains of such structures."\textsuperscript{31} But Weber was justified in his approach since he did not use the concept of bureaucracy "for a micro-level analysis of the internal structure of an organisation. He uses it in his cross-cultural general analysis, mainly in order to distinguish various types of domination and their corresponding administrative apparatus."\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p.22.


\textsuperscript{32} Nicos P. Mouzelis, \textit{op.cit.}, p.49.
1.2.3 Bureaucracy as viewed by the non-empirical functionalists.

Among the two non-empirical functionalists named earlier, Talcott Parsons undertook his scholarly pursuits a bit earlier than Robert K. Merton. But while Merton's theoretical exercises stem from a direct criticism of the Weberian theory, it is not so in the case of Parsons. Hence, it would be pertinent to discuss the Mertonian views on bureaucracy immediately after having discussed the Weberian treatment of the subject and then to turn to the Parsonian theory.

Merton adopts Veblen's concept of "trained incapacity." The bureaucrats are taught to comply rigidly with the rules to ensure uniformity and prevent favouratism. But they often fail to recognise the new demands of the changed situation and their training may lead them to adopt wrong procedures. "Again, in Burke's almost eulogistic phrase, 'people may be unfitted by being fit to an unfit fitness;' their training may become an incapacity." 33

The bureaucrats, in course of their training, are acquainted with different categories or fixed alternatives which are applied to solve different problems. There is a tendency to

try to cope with different kinds of situations with a smaller number of categories. The larger the magnitude of problems and the smaller the number of categories, the more vague the categorisation becomes. In a dynamic environment, problems of variegated nature arise for which it is not possible to suggest fixed alternative solutions. The responses of the bureaucrats, which are based on their previous training, only exposes their incapacity to become flexible and meet the demands of the changing situation. This is a particular variation of "trained incapacity" as understood by R.A. Sharma.\textsuperscript{34}

Further, in order to ensure discipline, the bureaucratic sentiment becomes more intense than is actually required. As for instance, added precautionary allowances are made by the engineer in designing the supports for a bridge. But this type of sentiment puts a premium upon strict observance of the particular working details required by the rules than upon fulfillment of the aims of the organization. "Adherence to the rules, originally conceived as means, becomes transformed

\textsuperscript{34} R.A. Sharma, \textit{op.cit.}, p.171.
into an end-in-itself; there occurs the familiar process of displacement of goals whereby an instrumental value becomes a terminal value. "Conformity with the regulations is not now a means to an end, but an end in itself. Rules are blindly followed regardless of the demands of the situation. "This formalism or ritualism may be exaggerated to the point where primary concern with conformity to the rules interferes with the achievement of the purposes of the organization, in which case we have the familiar phenomenon of technicism or red tape of the official."  

In the opinion of Blau and Meyer, extreme rigidity in bureaucratic functioning is the outcome of the fear of the superiors. The official, who was once reprimanded by his boss for having made an incorrect decision, will apply the rules blindly in similar cases and refrain from exercising discretion lest he may again be reprimanded. Overconformity to the rules protects him because "bureaucratic superiors cannot generally censure a subordinate for following official regulations exactly, regardless of how inefficient or ridiculous such action may be in a particular case."  

36 Ibid., p.199.  
37 Blau and Meyer, op.cit., p.104.
Displacement of goals takes place in another way too. Insistence on bureaucratic symbols and status leads to development of prerogatives which are viewed by the bureaucrats "as values in their own right, and are no longer viewed as merely technical means for expediting administration." These prerogatives might have originally been introduced for enabling the bureaucrat to properly discharge his functions. But the bureaucrat often overemphasizes those prerogatives and procedures, that dramatise his status, at the expense of the ultimate organisational goals for the attainment whereof these facilities were granted to him. A close resemblance is discernible between the Mertonian outlook here and Marx's views on creation of special myths and symbols by the bureaucrats to sanctify their positions.

Strict impartiality and formalised behaviour are set as norms for the bureaucrats. Any failure to conform to these norms "is met with widespread disapproval and is characterized by such epithets as graft, favouritism, apple-polishing etc. These epithets are clearly manifestations of injured sentiments."  

39 Cf. Marx's views on bureaucracy discussed earlier in subsection 1.2.2.
40 Robert K. Merton, op.cit., p.204.
The paradigm of bureaucratic behaviour pattern, as outlined by Merton, consists of five categories -- conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. A permutation combination of acceptance or rejection by the bureaucrat of the cultural goals of the organization and institutional means for achieving them takes place in the case of each of such behavioural patterns, as suggested by Merton. As for instance, in ritualism, the bureaucrat rejects the cultural goals while he accepts the institutional means.41

When the bureaucrat is faced with an over-demanding situation with no possibility of significant reward for having successfully coped with the challenge, he may choose to retreat. He reduces his participation in the decision-making process to a minimum, refrains from the exercise of discretion, and simply formally complies with the rules. In return, he risks little punishment.

Conformity is the most desirable behaviour pattern expected of the bureaucrat; it is the healthy adaptation of the bureaucrat with his organizational demands. In it, the rules are

interpreted by the bureaucrat in their proper perspective and applied by him for proper realisation of the organizational goals.

While conformity stands at the one end of the nexus, rebellion stands on the other end. The latter denotes an extreme form of behaviour in which the bureaucrat violates the rules and regulations as a means for ventilating his grievances. In bureaucratic organizations, excessive emphasis is generally laid on successful achievement of goal. The bureaucrat often fails to internalize the institutional norms governing the methods, and gives sole emphasis on goal-attainment. He may then use institutionally proscribed but effective means of goal-attainment. This is innovation which brings rapid success and is, therefore, occasionally resorted to by the bureaucrat.42

Merton adopts functional approach and frequently uses such concepts as system's needs, functions, dysfunctions etc. In functionalism, bureaucracy is viewed as a system which is partly shaped by purposive design and is partly formed spontaneously by forces emerging during the interaction of social

42 Ibid., pp.141-157.
beings. Any structural part is said to have a function when it contributes to the fulfillment of the need of the system. To the contrary, when the effects of the part hinder such need fulfillment, it is referred to as the dysfunction of that structural part. A certain social pattern can give rise to both functional and dysfunctional consequences for different needs of the system. In such a case, it becomes necessary to assess "a net balance of an aggregate of consequences". 43

Merton has made a distinction between manifest and latent functions or dysfunctions of a social pattern. Certain patterns bring forth anticipated consequences as to the need fulfillment of a system; these are what Merton has called manifest functions. But every contribution to the fulfillment of a system's need is not purposive. Moreover, not only such consequences are unintended, but they also remain unrecognised even after their occurrence. These are, to use the Mertonian terminology, latent functions. 44 P.M.  

44 Ibid., p.51.
Blau has used the concept of latent function in his study of two bureaucratic organizations in the U.S.A. The introduction of statistical performance records for the employees in such an organization, by intensifying inter-employee competition, had the latent function of discouraging racial discrimination between the White clients and the Negro clients.45

It has been noted earlier that Talcott Parsons uses the concept of 'organization'46, the bureaucratic structure being a part of the totality. The organization is viewed by Parsons as a social system composed of various sub-systems like groups, departments etc. and embedded within wider social systems like community, society etc. It is important to emphasize the system-within-system character of Parsons' approach. Parsons puts premium on values in his functional analysis of the organizational system. It is imperative for the organizational values to be in consonance with wider societal values. Organizational values, thus, legitimise the goals of the organization by emphasizing the system's contribution to the functional requirements of the larger social

46 Cf. earlier discussion on the meaning of the concept of 'organization' in Section 1.1.
This legitimisation enables the organisation not only to assert the superiority of its goals over the goals of its various sub-systems but also to obtain for itself a rightful place in society which is full of rival organizations, each competing for resource and public support. Parsons makes use of his pattern variables which refer to five basic and universal dilemmas that any actor faces in a social situation. These are as follows:

(1) Affectivity vs. Affective neutrality;
(2) Specificity vs. Diffuseness;
(3) Particularism vs. Universalism;
(4) Quality vs. Performance;
(5) Collectivity-orientation vs. Self-orientation.

These pattern variables refer to particular roles and relationships to which the members of the organization must orient themselves for the satisfaction of different functional requirements like adaptation, goal achievement, integration.

47 Nicos P. Mouzelis, op. cit., pp.149-150.
and latency. As for instance, the members of an organization, in the context of adaptation or goal-achievement, are expected to display affective neutrality in their official relationships; or they are judged according to their performance and not ascribed qualities. But in the context of ensuring integration of the organization, the opposite roles like affectivity and quality would be preferred. That is to say, the functional requirement of a given situation shapes the choice of a particular role by the actor from among the dilemmas.

"As to the fifth pattern variable (self v. collectivity orientation), it is analytically different from the other four. In the system-unit context, it refers to whether the unit acts on behalf of itself (self-orientation) or on behalf of the larger system (collectivity-orientation)." The bureaucrat protects collective interest, especially in a public organization. That is why the dilemma of self versus

collectivity orientation assumes particular significance in public bureaucracies.

The five pattern variables point out the systematic differences between various types of organizations. The four functional requirements, again, refer to problems common to all sorts of organizations. Such problems are differently solved by different organizations. Different solutions imply different structural arrangements whereby each organization tries to cope with its unique environment and its internal sub-systems.

Some critics are of the opinion that the Parsonian emphasis on values and processes has blurred the importance of groups in the organization. The mutual antagonism of such groups and the unequal distribution of power, prestige and other rewards explain not only the structural aspect of the organization but also its functioning.51

Blau beautifully sums up the difference between the Mertonian approach and the Parsonian approach in the following words:

Parsons is concerned with the interrelations between broad institutional complexes and, specifically, between abstract and analytical aspects of institutional systems. Merton, in contrast, focuses attention on the influences exerted by social structures on patterns of conduct; the core concept is that of structural constraints. To be sure, Merton also analyzes the way social regularities in behaviour become institutionalized and modify the social structure. But, in either case, the emphasis is on the relationships between some elements of social structure and an observable pattern of conduct rather than directly on the relationships between various abstract elements of social structure, as it is in Parsons. Later writings reveal parallel differences. Thus, Parsons' abstract conception of functionalism contrasts sharply with Merton's functional paradigm, with its down-to-earth concepts and emphasis on observed consequences.52

1.2.4 Bureaucracy, as viewed by the empiricists

The empiricists were primarily influenced by the Mertonian pragmatism and his critique of the Weberian ideal-type model. Unlike earlier thinkers, they undertook field-work with a

52 Peter M. Blau, op.cit., pp.269-270.
micro-level, organization-bound approach and based their theoretical generalisations mainly on such empirical studies. Most of the empiricists were also functionalists since their early training had been in the Mertonian functionalism. While there are so many empiricists, only four have been selected from among them as their representatives. These four are Peter M. Blau, Alvin W. Gouldner, P. Selznick and Michel Crozier. A review of their working on bureaucracy will highlight the essentials of bureaucratic characteristics, other than those pointed out by Marx, Weber, Merton and Parsons. Often such empiricists have modified and reformulated the generalisations made by their predecessors by adding new dimensions to the views of the latter.

Blau became interested in the study of bureaucracy since he was keen to examine the nature of the compelling force the social structure exerts upon human behaviour, this force being very prominent and apparent in bureaucracy. Secondly, he thought that the application of Merton's functional framework, which is a revision of the Weberian model, would lead to the development of new insights in this field. Thirdly, Blau was interested in social reform and, therefore, tried
to ascertain the nature of threat posed by bureaucracy to
democratic institutions.\textsuperscript{53}

Blau undertook field-works through case study method in two American organizations — one being a state employment agency and the other being a federal enforcement agency.\textsuperscript{54} Though such empirical studies and other theoretical exercises, he has blurred the popular assumption that bureaucratic structures are rigid and fixed and function according to the organisational manual and prescribed line of command in accordance with the formal blueprint. Bureaucracy evolves new practices and procedures that take some time before they are institutionalized. Some of these new practices and procedures may be instrumental in achieving the objectives of the organization while others may create obstacles in this process. It becomes necessary to resolve this organisational dilemma in a way that will encourage those practices and procedures which facilitate the realisation of the goals of the organization. But once innovations

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 270.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
are introduced, they may create new problems and it may become necessary to modify the structure of the bureaucratic organization for the solution of such problems.\(^{55}\)

Blau wanted to examine the various forms of displacement of goals. One of them is the way in which rules operate in the organization. Since no rule can anticipate and cover all future exigencies, use of discretion is permitted in practice. But some of the bureaucrats use discretionary powers either to benefit themselves or to assert their importance by way of emphasizing only the negative aspects of rules. Also, rules prohibit full utilization of the potentials of those bureaucrats who are above the average. Thus, applications of rules are associated with some unintended consequences that generally create troubles which are greater than the existing ones for the solution whereof the rules were meant.\(^{56}\)

The formal rules of bureaucracy are often violated and informality arises in the midst of the formal set-up. While the essential regulations are regularly obeyed, violation of


some rules becomes necessary for the smooth functioning of the organization. The difference between the formal organization and the informal organization of the bureaucratic structure becomes relevant in this context. Blau wanted to offer a functional analysis of the role of the informal organization vis-a-vis that of the formal organization, the way the informal organization affects the operations of the formal organization, and the manner in which the former is influenced by the latter. Blau suggested that a basic function of the informal organization is to mitigate the impersonality of the bureaucratic structure. While a detached attitude is required in some official relations, such as employee-client and superior-subordinate relations, warm informality arises among workers who work next to one another but not with one another, such as the members of a stenographic pool. Unofficial practices, although at variance with the organization manual, may help achievement of the organizational objectives. The practice of consulting the colleagues in official matters is an example of such unofficial practices that persist in violation of the official rules. Blau suggested that this practice serves
the function of relieving the tension that develops in course of contact of the officials with the public. In this way, such consultation leads to improved efficiency in performance.\footnote{Blau and Meyer, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.37-38 and 49-50; and Peter M.Blau, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.106-112 and p.271.}

The concept of informal leadership vis-a-vis that of formal leadership is also relevant in understanding the organizational operations.

Informal leadership freely emerges among a group of peers. It is initially the result of personality differences that have been socially magnified. Some members of the group excel in activities that are highly valued by all, whether these are street fightings or solving complex problems; the few will be more respected, and their operations will carry greater weight. The person in the extreme position, if he also finds ways to obligate the others to him, is expected to be the group's leader.\footnote{Blau and Meyer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.66.}

Alvin W. Gouldner distinguishes between bureaucracy founded on expertness and bureaucracy based on punition. There are

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Blau and Meyer, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.37-38 and 49-50; and Peter M.Blau, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.106-112 and p.271.}
\item \footnote{Blau and Meyer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.66.}
\end{itemize}
differences in the forms of subordination and control in these two types of bureaucracy. In Gouldner's view, bureaucracy founded on expertness can escape bureaucratic dysfunctions to a considerable extent since the values, on which it rests, can be acceptable to everybody. In bureaucracy founded on punishment, interpersonal tension is generated between the inferior and the superior bureaucrats. Here, elaboration of rules brings forth the unintended consequence of decreasing the tension which arises out of the control exercised by the superiors, on the basis of their power and authority, over the subordinates. But such elaboration of rules has an unintended dysfunctional consequence also. Rules define in details what behaviour on the part of the employees will be treated as unacceptable by the organizational authority. The other side of the same coin is increase in the knowledge of the employees about minimum acceptable behaviour. Such knowledge, in conjunction with a low level of internalization of the organizational goals, induces the employees to perform the minimum task required. As a consequence, increase in supervisory activity becomes inevitable and this, in
turn, increases interpersonal tension and conflict. Also, rules may be used in an organization by the superiors and the subordinates alike. Both groups can try to suspend the application of rules or insist upon it inasmuch as those are advantageous or disadvantageous to their own interests. 59

In his study of an unofficial strike contained in Wildcat Strike, 60 the interpersonal tension and conflict in the organization assume a more acute form. It is manifested in different disorganizing patterns, threatening the balance of the system. At such juncture, organizational defence mechanism becomes active. Responses to the emergent tension are made in a manner so that a new equilibrium is established in the system.

Philip Selznick offers a new variant of the phenomenon of "goal displacement". An organization is generally composed of different divisions, departments or sections which can be


treated as the sub-units of the organization. Due to increasing complexity of the organizational tasks, decentralisation and delegation of responsibility to the sub-units become inevitable. But this leads to bifurcation or splitting of interests between the central system and its sub-units. There is a tendency of the latter to neglect the main organizational goals and to emphasize their limited sub-goals. Therefore, the sub-goals become transformed from simple means to ends in themselves. Employees working in the sub-units internalise the sub-goals of the latter. The accomplishment of these sub-goals respectively becomes the sole concern of the employees working in particular sub-units. In this situation, the need for centralized control becomes stronger, defeating the process of decentralisation.\textsuperscript{61}

Again, Selznick shows, in his study of a New Deal federal agency, how the pressure exerted by powerful interest groups in the periphery of bureaucracy may cause deviation from the organizational objectives. Selznick shows that the Tennessee Valley Authority, in its efforts to compromise and accommodate

\textsuperscript{61} R.A. Sharma, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 174.
itself with the local interests, undertook a series of commitments the consequence whereof has been a change in the initial progressive policies and goals of the organization.\textsuperscript{62}

Selznick observes that the decisions taken in an organization are of two types — routine and critical. While the routine decisions may not be unimportant, the leadership of the organization is primarily concerned with the critical decisions. The critical decisions call for the "dynamic adaptation" of the leadership to the organizational experiences as determined by the interplay of internal and external forces. Critical decisions relate to that shadowy area where day-to-day administration and policy-formulation converge together. Such critical decisions have far-reaching consequence for the organization.\textsuperscript{63}

Michel Crozier undertook field-works in two French government agencies.\textsuperscript{64} On the basis of his field-studies, he could

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\textsuperscript{64} Michel Crozier, \textit{op.cit.}
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evolve his own model of analysing the organizational processes in terms of power relations and conflict among different groups of employees within the organization. In the opinion of Crozier, the process of subordination of all the rank and file to the superior officers within the organization never becomes complete. There is always the possibility of offering the resistance of human means, which are at the disposal of the groups of lower level officials, to any attempt of complete control by the superior officials. The cohesive groups arranged along the occupational strata try to manipulate rules as a means of enhancing group prerogatives and of ensuring independence from arbitrary interference by the bosses. One can remind here Gouldner's concept of dysfunctional consequences of rules. There are other complementary weapons too, as mentioned by Crozier, to fight the battle. "Ponderousness and 'bureaucratic' routine can easily be interpreted as aspects of the resistance of the human means to the organizational goals."\(^\text{65}\)

But rules can never cover all situations and eliminate all uncertainties in the decision-making process. Conflicts

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p.7.
emerge and become acute in such unregulated areas over the question of domination and subordination. In such circumstances, the groups, which have a greater control over the decision-making processes in the unregulated areas, can definitely improve their power positions vis-a-vis the other groups who are influenced by the uncertainties or the unregulated matters within the organization.\textsuperscript{66}

Crozier refers to the views of the rationalists who think that only financial incentives are sufficient to resolve the conflicts and to ensure conformity to orders and greater productive efforts. But again, Crozier reminds, there are proponents of human relations approach who believe that a permissive leadership can solve the problem of conflict and ensure a perfect equation between satisfaction of the employees and their productivity.\textsuperscript{67} Crozier now offers his own suggestions for the solution of the problem of conflict.

The manager has two sets of conflicting weapons: rationalization and rule-making on one side; and the power to make exceptions and to ignore the

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p.192.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p.149.
rules on the other. His own strategy will be to find out the best combination of both weapons, according to the objectives of the unit of which he is in charge and to the degree to which members of the unit are interested in those objectives. Proliferation of the rules curtails his own power. Too many exceptions to the rules reduce his ability to check other people’s power. Formal structure and informal relationships should not be opposed. They interpenetrate and complete each other.68

Crozier challenges Merton’s theory about the impact of the bureaucratic structure on moulding the individual’s personality, e.g. emergence of ritualism and inflexibility in bureaucratic behaviour. Crozier opines that the caste spirit of the bureaucrat, his tendency to transforms means into ends, his inclination to stick to the letters of the rules etc. are not the consequences of transformation of his personality due to the impact of the bureaucratic structure. Generally, these are consciously-adopted strategies whereby the bureaucrats try to affirm their independence from the higher ups and to consolidate their power positions.69

68 Ibid., pp.163-164.
69 Ibid., pp.198-203.
We have discussed the major features of bureaucracy as outlined by several sociologists. An awareness of such features will be helpful for a proper comprehension of the subject under study. The concepts evolved by the above thinkers will be used in suitable context in course of subsequent discussion.

1.3 Emergence of modern bureaucracy and its relevance in the contemporary society

Social scientists are at disagreement on the causes of the emergence of modern bureaucracy as a historical phenomenon. In the opinion of Max Weber, the emergence of money economy was a historical condition that paved the way for emergence of modern bureaucracy in the Western World. In addition to that, Weber has ascribed the process of bureaucratization to the increasing supply of consumption goods following the application of machine technology. The new administrative tasks that ushered after the emergence of the modern state, the machine technology and the industrial economy necessitated a highly organized and permanent administrative apparatus and it was bureaucracy. 70

70 Gerth and Mills, eds., op.cit., pp.204-213.
Some later thinkers also are of the opinion that proliferation of bureaucracy is the result of modern capitalism. In the past, organizations were comparatively small and predominated by face-to-face contact between the owner and the workers. These organizations operated without formally defined goals, policies and procedures. The persons whom the entrepreneur considered competent were assigned responsibilities without emphasis on special training. But, with the industrial revolution, technological transformation took place with consequent increase in the size and complexity of the organization. The economic advantages of large-scale production led to the establishment of big industrial enterprises. Due to environmental volatility, increasing complexity, rapidly changing technology, growing size etc., organizations gradually established standard roles, norms and hierarchy. This is the process of institutionalization. The organizations were characterized by rationality, efficiency, reliability, predictability, and open and clear modus operandi. A high degree of institutionalization led to the development of bureaucratic organizations.
These private bureaucratic organizations, after gaining strength by different ways including monopolization, exerted pressure on the government to safeguard their interests. They sought different accommodative measures from the government, examples being enactment of protective tariff laws and establishment of bureaucratic apparatus necessary for enforcing those laws. Hence, bureaucracy in private industry as well as government may be considered as the product of the forces generated by capitalism.\footnote{Cf. Robert A. Brandy, Business as a System of Power (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).}

Again, in the opinion of some other social scientists, the deliberate attempt of the government to interfere with the capitalist economy is the main cause of proliferation of bureaucracy. Since the government becomes ideologically committed to the regulation of free economic activities, it cannot but expand its bureaucratic machinery. Also, the government disturbs the competitive mechanism of the free market, and often monopolies grow in the public sector under governmental patronage. The political decision to curb the
unbridled growth of capitalism, therefore, causes the emergence of bureaucratic business monopolies as well as public bureaucracies.\textsuperscript{72}

In the opinion of Blau and Meyer, the giant size of the modern states and existence of a large number of organizations within them are the chief reasons for the proliferation of bureaucracy. In the earlier periods, most countries were of small size and a few large ones could manage only with a loose central administration. Also, there were few formal organizations at that time. The large organizations that persisted in the ancient times, like the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church, were thoroughly bureaucratized.

"Modern countries have many millions of citizens, vast armies, giant corporations, huge unions and numerous large voluntary associations."\textsuperscript{73} Owing to such large-scale organization of the modern states, administrative problems


\textsuperscript{73} Blau and Meyer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.11.
proliferate and increasing bureaucratization becomes necessary to cope with them. Blau and Meyer further hold that modern democracy is also responsible for making bureaucratic organizations indispensable for governance. "Democratic objectives would be impossible to attain in modern society without bureaucratic organizations to implement them. Thus, once the decision to provide free employment service to the public had been reached through democratic processes, a complex administrative system for this purpose had to be established." 74

Bureaucracy has emerged as a distinctive feature in the process of rationalization of life. It aids the process of modernization, and developed bureaucratic organizations are also the fruits of modernization. Efficiency, division of labour, coordination, fixed hierarchy of authority, discipline, a system based on rules, impersonality and indifference towards personal emotions — which are the features of bureaucracy — are the hall-marks of modern society too. The evils of bureaucracy are numerous, just

74 Ibid., p.165.
like the costs of modernization. But without bureaucracy, mass-scale production, modern systems of government, advancement of scientific knowledge and culture — in a nutshell, modern life would not have become possible. In the opinion of Blau and Meyer, the high standard of living enjoyed by the people of the developed countries today are partly the consequence of adoption of efficient bureaucratic methods of organization in private industry.75 The presence of bureaucratic features in most of the large organizations serving our needs in modern times is proclaimed by Blau and Meyer in the following manner:

The employment agency we approach to get a job, and the union we join to protect it; the supermarket and the chain store where we shop, and the hospitals treating our illnesses; the school our children attend, and the political parties for whose candidates we vote; the fraternal organization where we play, and the church where we worship — all these more often than not are large organizations of the kind that tends to be bureaucratically organized.76

75 Ibid., p.165.
76 Ibid., pp.11-12.
1.4 The value of studying bureaucracy

The different benefits that the sociologists may reap by studying bureaucracy have been analysed by Blau and Meyer. The first utility is that bureaucracy provides a natural laboratory for social research. The formal organization, with its official regulations and organizational charts, constitutes controlled conditions. These controls have not been artificially introduced by the sociologist, but they are embedded in the bureaucratic structure. The effects of these controlled conditions on the daily activities and interactions of the members of a bureaucratic organization can be studied. Of course, bureaucratic functioning is not solely determined by the official blueprint. Also, conditions are not fully controlled here as in a laboratory experiment. Nevertheless, the formal organization, the characteristics whereof can be easily ascertained, reduces the number of variable conditions. It facilitates the development and testing of explanatory hypotheses. In another context, Blau observes that if one is interested to examine the compelling force, the social structure exerts upon human behaviour, it will be quite logical for him to

77 Ibid., pp.15-16.
study bureaucracy where this force is so apparent and pronounced.78

Secondly, in the opinion of Blau and Meyer, bureaucracies are ideal sites for examining the relationship between the social structure and the normative system associated with it. The organizational chart narrates the formal structure of the organization, and official rules and regulations form its normative system. A study of bureaucracy makes possible the examination of the interplay between various structural characteristics and official procedures. The information gathered in this way helps to deal with important theoretical questions about organizations.

Thirdly, the boundaries of the bureaucratic organizations are clear and the criteria of their membership are well-defined. Their purposes are also explicit which is not the case for families, communities etc. Hence, they can be studied as total social systems. But since organizations are relatively small compared to communities, it is easier to study the former than the latter. The study of bureaucratic organizations may, then, contribute to a general understanding of complex social systems.

78 Peter M. Blau, op.cit., p.270.