

CHAPTER-VI

PERCEPTION OF IMAGES OF THE OFFICIALS AND THE NON-OFFICIALS AT THE
THREE LEVELS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN THE MALDA DISTRICT

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6.1 Officials and Non-Officials' Perception of Images :

This chapter is concerned with the perception of officials and non-officials' reciprocal images which will help us indirectly to assess the relationship between the two. An effective measurement to evaluate one's role and functions in relation to the other is the image one has of the other and vice-versa. Images and outlooks, as Bjorkman observes, "are not, of course, figments of the imagination; they are real events that influence behaviour. Images are significant in political and social conduct because no one has time or information, nor does any one have resources to know everything about everybody. Images of oneself and opinions about others, which also reinforce each other, are used to simplify the complexities of reality".¹ In W.I.Thomas's phrase, "What is believed to be real has real consequences".² Other authors observe that "Images represent not only the outcome of evaluation a person makes of another but also affect his

orientation towards the object of his evaluation".³ The Dictionary of Behavioural Science defines image as "internal evaluative representation of one's body determined largely by how one thinks it looks to others".⁴ For the purpose of this study, images represent the "outcome of evaluation a person makes of another and also the real events that influence behaviour".

The image officials have of non-officials helps them to orient their behaviour towards their counterparts. One's behaviour towards his counterpart is influenced to a great extent by the former's image of the latter. Two sets of questions relating to image, one for officials and other for non-officials, were prepared to ask questions of all kinds of images to both of them. What the officials think of themselves and what they think of non-officials have an important impact upon the relationship between the two. In the case of officials, the image variables included such dimensions as their fairness and impartiality, their orientation towards work-facilitation, and their disposition towards people as well as political leaders and non-officials. Besides these, other dimensions of officials' images included their innovativeness, propensity to interfere in local affairs, willingness to encourage local initiative and awareness of local problems.

In the case of non-officials, the image variables included non-officials' tendency towards self aggrandizement, their

ignorance of and disrespect towards administrative rules, regulations and procedures, their propensity to create trouble for administration and to promote the welfare of the people.

Questions relating to image were asked to officials and non-officials to collect information about what the officials think of themselves, and what the self images of the non-officials are, and vice versa. Thus it helps us to know how much there is agreement or differences of opinion between the officials and the non-officials. Information collected on the officials' image is stated in the table 6.1.

Table 6.1
Officials' Image : Attributes

Items	Officials			Non-Officials				
	A	PA	D	A	PA	D	O	
Officials are concerned mainly with improving their own prospects	T	17 20.98	9 11.11	55 67.90	55 77.33	4 4.76	12 14.28	3 3.57
	D	5 23.30	2 9.52	14 66.66	12 75.00	1 6.25	2 12.50	1 6.25
	B	9 20.00	5 11.11	31 68.88	36 78.26	2 4.34	6 13.04	2 4.34
	V	3 20.00	2 13.33	10 66.66	17 77.27	1 4.54	4 18.18	-

(Contd...)

Table 6.1 (Contd...)

Items	Officials			Non-Officials				
	A	PA	D	A	PA	D	O	
Officials work ignoring the advice of others and do whatever they like	T	17	9	55	60	6	16	2
		20.98	11.11	67.90	71.42	7.14	19.04	2.38
	D	5	2	14	11	1	3	1
		23.80	9.52	66.66	68.75	6.25	18.75	6.25
	B	9	5	31	33	3	9	1
		20.00	11.11	68.88	71.73	6.52	19.56	2.17
	V	3	2	10	16	2	4	-
		20.00	13.33	66.66	72.72	9.09	18.18	

Keys : Totals may not be exactly one hundred because of rounding.
 Officials : 81(21,45,15) Non-officials : 34(16,46,22)
 Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentages.

Table 6.1 presents that 67.90 percent of officials at all levels refuse to agree that the officials are concerned mainly with improving their own prospects. According to officials they are concerned only with the work to which they are assigned to perform. In the performance of their work they strictly follow rules and regulations. Moreover, they told during the discussion that they are concerned with the interest and welfare of the people while administering development programmes but they cannot accommodate the interest of the people beyond rules. The high degree of agreement among the officials indicates that there is homogeneity in group thinking. On the other hand, 77.38 percent

of non-officials agree that the officials are concerned mainly with improving their own prospects. According to non-officials, the officials do not like to take any risk or initiative. The officials believe that there are risks of failure in the performance of any job at their own initiative and for which they may be punished. So they do not like to perform any work that will affect their career. On the second statement, 71.42 percent of non-officials agree that they do work ignoring the advice of others and only do whatever they like. Only 19.04 percent of non-officials disagree with the statement. The data relating to officials' image attributes make it clear that there is no agreement between the officials and the non-officials. The officials have a different image than the non-officials and vice-versa. It is found that the officials and the non-officials have applied two different evaluative standards for expressing their opinions on different issues of officials' image attributes.

Table 6.2

Officials' Image Relating to Fairness and Impartiality

Items	Officials				Non-Officials			
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O
Officials' guarantee fair & just treatment for all	73 T 90.12	-	8 9.87	-	13 15.47	1 1.19	65 77.38	5 5.95
	19 D 90.47		2 9.52		2 12.50	1 6.52	.12 75.00	1 6.25

(Contd...)

Table 6.2 (Contd...)

Items	Officials				Non-Officials			
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O
	41		4		7		36	3
B	91.11		8.89		15.21		78.26	6.25
	13		2		4		17	1
V	86.66		13.33		18.18		77.27	4.54
Officials work in the interest of ruling groups	30	9	42		25		57	2
T	37.30	11.11	51.85	-	29.76	-	67.85	2.38
	8	2	11		5		11	
D	38.09	9.52	52.38		31.25		68.75	-
	17	5	23		14		31	1
B	37.77	11.11	51.11		30.43		67.39	2.17
	5	2	8		6		15	1
V	33.33	13.33	53.33		27.27		68.18	4.54

Keys : Totals may not be exactly cent percent (100) because of rounding

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentages.

A = Agree T = Total; D = District; B = Block; V = Village

PA = Partially Agree

D = Disagree

O = Others

Total no. of officials = 31; Total no. of non-officials = 34

District " = 21 " = 16

Block " = 45 " = 46

Village " = 15 " = 22

Table 6.2 presents that 90 percent of officials at the three levels agree that the officials guarantee fair and just treatment for all. The non-officials on the other hand, hold the opposite view. 77.38 percent of non-officials refuse to agree that the officials guarantee fair and just treatment for all. Though Max Weber pointed out that the bureaucrat must be impartial and neutral, in actual situations it is difficult for them to maintain these characteristics. Several authors also advanced arguments against the impartial character of bureaucracy. The rationality, efficiency and hierarchic characteristics impair fairness and impartiality among the officials. 52.38 percent of officials and 63.75 percent of non-officials refuse to agree that the officials work in the interest of ruling groups. This indicates that the officials consider rules and regulations as the primary guide of their behaviour regarding the implementation of any work. Moreover, the discussion with the scholars and fellows suggests that the officials interpret rules and in the course of doing this job the officials possibly can interpret rules of the organisation in their own way in order to protect their autonomous status and position. Generally speaking, officials are not sent to a place to perform their jobs for a permanent period. After completion of a few years, officials are transferred from one place to another. So the officials are interested for their own benefit than the benefit of the people in the local community while administering development programmes. Officials work in the interest of ruling groups to the extent it does not affect the autonomous status and

position. It is observed from the table 6.2 that 33.33 percent of officials and 29.76 percent of non-officials agree that the officials work in the interest of ruling groups. There is a low degree of agreement between the officials and the non-officials.

Table 6.3
Officials' Image Orientation towards People

Items	Officials				Non-Officials			
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O
Officials are indifferent to people's difficulties	9	1	71	-	63	5	15	1
	T 11.11	1.23	87.65		75.00	5.95	17.35	1.19
	2	1	18		12	1	3	-
	D 9.52	4.76	85.71		75.00	6.25	12.50	
	5		40		35	2	8	1
	B 11.11		83.33		76.03	4.54	17.39	2.17
	2		13		16	2	4	
	V 13.33		86.66		72.72	9.09	18.18	
Officials are helpful to the people in redressing their problems	75	-	6	-	24	9	50	1
	T 92.52		7.14		28.57	10.71	59.52	1.19
	19		2		4	2	10	-
	D 90.47		9.52		25.00	12.50	62.50	
	42		3		13	5	27	1
	B 93.33		6.52		28.26	10.86	58.62	2.17
	14		1		7	2	13	
	V 93.33		6.66		31.87	9.09	59.09	

Table 6.4

Officials' image orientation towards Political leaders

Items								
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O
Officials distrust political leaders	12 T 14.31	4 4.93	65 80.24	-	57 67.85	6 7.10	19 22.61	2 2.38
	3 D 14.28	1 4.76	17 80.95		11 68.75	1 6.25	3 18.75	1 6.25
	7 B 15.55	2 4.44	36 80.00		31 67.39	4 8.69	10 21.73	1 2.17
	2 V 13.33	1 6.66	12 80.00		15 68.13	2 9.09	5 22.72	-
Officials do not appreciate the difficulties of politicians	10 T 12.34	20 24.69	49 60.49	2 1.23	51 60.71	21 25.00	10 11.90	2 2.38
	3 D 14.28	5 23.30	13 61.90		10 62.50	4 25.00	2 12.50	-
	6 B 13.33	11 24.44	27 60.00	1 2.22	28 60.36	12 26.08	5 10.86	1 2.17
	1 V 6.56	4 25.00	9 60.00	1 6.56	13 59.09	5 22.72	3 13.63	1 4.54

Keys : Total may not be exactly cent percent (100) because of rounding.

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentages.

T = Total; D = District; B = Block; V = Village

Total number of officials : 81; Non-officials : 84

District " : 21 " : 16

Block " : 45 " : 46

Village " : 15 " : 22

A = Agree; PA = Partially Agree; D = Disagree; O = Others.

Table 6.3 presents that more than 85 percent of officials at the three levels disagree with the statement that the officials are indifferent to people's difficulties. But 75.00 percent of the non-officials agree with the statement. The reason may be that they might have an urban background and this created some apathy towards the people at the rural areas. The officials do not try to realise the problems of rural people and are not also eager to solve the problems. It is also confirmed by the fact that almost 59 percent of non-officials at the three levels disagree with the statement that the officials are helpful to the people in redressing their problems. On the other hand, more than 90 percent of officials at the three levels agree that they are helpful to the people in redressing their problems. The above table presents that there is no agreement between the officials and the non-officials.

The extent to which officials are oriented towards political leaders can be examined from the Table 6.4. Responses presented in the table can be classified into two types : one is functional relationship and the other is personal relationship based on mutual trust and appreciation. Both patterns of relationship are absent in the behaviour of officials according to non-officials. 67.85 percent of non-officials agree that the officials distrust political leaders and 60.71 percent of non-officials also agree that they do not appreciate the difficulties of politicians. So there is an agreement among the non-officials

on the issue of officials' trust and appreciation of difficulties of politicians. On the other hand, the officials hold an opposite view on these issues. 30.24 percent of officials state that officials trust political leaders and 60.49 percent of officials appreciate the difficulties of politicians. It is evident that the officials hold more or less similar opinion. The reason for this may be that the officials accepted the democratic process of politics to the extent the leaders of democratic organisation follow its rules and procedures.

The non-officials' image as perceived by the officials and by themselves towards the people and officials will be discussed now. There is a great deal of agreement between the officials and the non-officials but there is a little amount of disagreement or difference between them on several image dimensions.

Table 6.5

Non-Officials' Image : Interest Identification

Items	Officials				Non-Officials			
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O
1. Leaders work in their self interest	24	7	49	1	23	6	54	1
T	(29.62)	8.64	60.49	1.23	27.33	7.14	64.28	1.19
D	6	2	13	-	4	1	11	-
	28.57	9.52	61.90		25.00	6.25	68.75	
B	13	4	27	1	13	4	28	1
	23.88	8.38	60.00	2.22	28.26	8.69	60.86	2.17
V	5	1	9	-	6	1	15	-
	33.33	6.66	60.00		27.27	4.54	68.78	

(Contd...)

Table 6.5 (Contd...)

2 Items	Officials				Non-Officials			
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O
2. Politicians are concerned mainly with furthering the interest of their own relatives and friends	45 T 55.55	12 14.81	23 28.39	1 1.23	37 44.04	6 7.40	39 46.42	2 2.38
	11 D 52.38	3 14.28	6 28.57	1 4.76	7 43.75	1 6.25	7 43.75	1 6.25
	25 B 55.55	7 15.55	13 28.88	-	20 43.47	3 6.25	22 47.82	1 2.17
	9 V 60.00	2 13.33	4 26.66		10 45.45	2 9.09	10 45.45	-
3. Politicians care for peoples welfare	38 T 46.91	9 11.11	32 39.50	2 2.46	53 63.09	9 10.71	19 22.61	3 3.57
	10 D 47.61	2 9.52	8 38.09	1 4.76	10 62.50	2 12.50	3 18.75	1 6.25
	21 B 46.66	5 11.11	18 40.00	1 2.22	29 63.04	5 10.86	10 21.73	2 4.34
	7 V 46.44	2 13.33	6 40.00	-	14 63.63	2 9.09	6 27.27	-

Keys : Officials : 81; Non-officials : 84

Dist. " : 21; " " : 16

Block " : 45; " " : 46

Village " : 15; " " : 22

A : Agree; PA : Partially Agree; D : Disagree; O : Others.

Totals may not be exactly cent percent (100) because of rounding.

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentages.

T = Total; D = District; B = Block; V = Village.

It may be observed from the Table 6.5 that there is total disagreement between the officials and the non-officials on the statement "Leaders work in their self interest". 60.49 percent of officials and 64.28 percent of non-officials agree that they give priority to their self interest. However, on the second statement there is a small measure of agreement among the non-officials on the question of furthering the interest of their relatives and friends. 44.04 percent of non-officials agree that the politicians are concerned mainly with furthering the interest of their relatives and friends. On the other hand, 55.55 percent of officials also consider that the political leaders are concerned with parochial interest. So the responses indicate that the leaders do not work for their self interest but they express to work for furthering the interest of their relatives and friends. The reason for this may be that the non-officials, in order to seek re-election in future, try to satisfy the needs and demands of their relatives and friends. The third statement deals with the question of non-officials' image orientation towards the welfare of the people. It may be observed that according to 46.91 percent of officials, politicians care for people's welfare. 39.50 percent of officials refuse to agree with the statement. On the other hand, 63.09 percent of non-officials agree that they are concerned with the welfare of the people. Again, 11.11 percent of officials partially agree with the statement. This indicates that the non-officials are not unconcerned with public welfare though very few officials disagree with the statement.

Table 6.6

Non-Officials' : Image Attributes

Items	Officials				Non-Officials				
	A	PA	D	O	A	PA	D	O	
Leaders are generally cooperative with officials		29	7	44	1	59	13	12	-
	T	35.80	8.64	54.32	1.23	70.23	15.47	14.28	
		7	2	12		11	2	3	
	D	38.09	9.52	57.14		68.75	12.50	18.75	
Leaders do not trust officials		15	4	24	1	33	7	6	
	B	35.55	8.88	53.33	2.22	71.73	15.21	13.04	
		6	1	8		15	4	3	
	V	40.00	6.66	50.00		68.18	18.18	13.62	
Leaders do not trust officials		35	8	35	3	12	4	68	
	T	43.20	9.87	43.20	3.70	14.28	4.76	80.95	
		9	2	9	1	2	1	13	
	D	42.85	9.52	42.85	4.76	12.50	6.25	81.25	
Leaders create troubles for the officials		19	5	19	2	7	2	37	
	B	42.22	11.11	42.22	4.44	15.21	4.34	80.43	
		7	1	7		3	1	18	
	V	46.66	6.66	46.66		13.63	4.54	31.81	
Leaders create troubles for the officials		57	8	15	1	4	12	68	
	T	70.37	9.37	18.51	1.23	4.76	14.28	80.95	
		15	2	4	-	1	2	13	
	D	71.42	9.52	19.04		6.25	12.50	81.25	
Leaders create troubles for the officials		32	4	8	1	2	7	37	
	B	71.11	8.88	17.77	2.22	4.34	15.21	80.43	
		10	2	3	-	1	3	18	
	V	66.66	13.33	20.00		4.54	13.63	81.81	

Keys : Total may not be exactly cent percent (100) because of rounding.

Total Number of Officials:	81;	Total Number of Non-Officials :	84
District	" :21	" "	: 16
Block	" :45	" "	: 46
Village	" :15	" "	: 22

Figures in the parenthesis indicate the percentages.

A : Agree; PA : Partially Agree; D : Disagree; O : Others.

T : Total; D : District; B : Block; V : Village.

Table 6.6 presents non-officials' image attributes as perceived by themselves and by officials at the three levels of Panchayati Raj institutions of the Malda district. It is observed from the Table that there is no agreement between the officials and the non-officials on the question of non-officials' image attributes relating to cooperation, mutual trust and creation of troubles for the officials. Only on the first and second statements there is very low degree of agreement between the officials and the non-officials. 35.30 percent of officials and 70.23 percent of non-officials agree that the leaders are generally cooperative with the officials. 43.20 percent of officials and 80.95 percent of non-officials refused to agree that the leaders do not trust officials. The nature of frequency distribution gives the impression that a closer relationship with officials is encouraged by a large group of non-officials. A large majority of non-officials also cooperate with officials. On the other hand, 54.32 percent of officials refuse to agree that leaders are

cooperative. 43.20 percent of officials also agree that the leaders do not trust officials. 70.37 percent of officials and only 4.76 percent of non-officials agree and 14.28 percent of non-officials partially agree that the leaders create troubles for the officials. According to officials, the non-officials' involvement in the power struggle and identity of themselves with friends and relatives' interest may be considered important factors responsible for creating troubles for the officials.

Summing up the discussion, it is found that the non-officials and the officials in perception of their image attributes agreed on some occasions and disagreed on many issues of image-dimensions. The data make it clear that the officials and the non-officials hold a very high opinion about themselves. Sometimes leaders did not hesitate to hold a very unfavourable opinion about their own attributes. The non-officials cooperate with and trust officials. They are also concerned with public welfare and on some occasions they try to identify themselves with the interest of the friends and relatives. Officials hold that they are helpful to the people and the leaders. They guarantee fair and just treatment for all as well as they appreciate the difficulties of politicians.

NOTES AND REFERENCES TO CHAPTER VI

1. J.W.Bjorkman, "Politics of Administrative Alienation in India's Rural Development Programmes", Ajanta Publications, 1979, p.57.
2. Cited in Bjorkman's Politics of Administrative Alienation in India's Rural Development Programmes, p.57.
3. Roy, Ramashray and Shanti Kothari, "Relations between Politicians and Administrators at the District Level", Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1981, p.90.
4. Benjamin B.Wolman (ed.), "Dictionary of Behavioural Science", The Macmillan Press Ltd. United States of America, 1973, p.183.