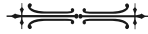


## *Chapter 1*

# THE VULNERABLE PATRON: PLAYING THE ROLE OF A FOREIGN GENDER CONSULTANT



## **Patronage and Power–dependence Relations**

Recounting my experience as a patron in Nepal in the summer of 1997 seems to be a suitable way to begin a discussion about how and why people, men in particular, patronize other people, women in particular, in the context of gender development projects. Studying the dynamics and nature of patronization from a personal, and in my case, a woman's point of view, makes this subject intriguing and disturbing at one and the same time. Dealing with women's patronization from my own experience enables a better understanding of questions such as: How are people absorbed into the frameworks of local, national, and international development organizations that preserve women's (or others') exclusion and discrimination? How can one explain women's cooperation with mechanisms that, in the name of improving women's opportunities, contribute to women's ongoing marginalization?

Reflecting on my experience from the perspective of a vulnerable participant and observer, and my desire to write about it “vulnerably” (Behar 1996), introduces some thought-provoking insights into situations that are often conveniently perceived in terms of self-evident truths, such as ideological commitments or professional conduct. Using my own experience as a foreign gender consultant, being “myself the principal informant” (Mosse 2005: ix), will enable me to elaborate on these questions from “within.” Thus, I will show that being a feminist, a social activist, and a self-conscious anthropologist cannot prevent one from being absorbed into power games and patronizing attitudes when one becomes part of a power structure or “a cog” in the bureaucratic machine (Weber 1978).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, exposing my conduct as both patronizing and pathetic reveals the interchange of control and dependency, which are interwoven in encounters that are embedded with power differentials.

I perceive patronage as a concept which combines power–dependence relations and the rhetoric of help, care, and aid. Patronage, from this point of view, is control and/or domination disguised by the rhetoric of egalitarianism, humanism, feminism, and so forth. The perceived conceptual dyad of patron–client, which signi-

fies power gaps embedded in formalized social structures, is widely discussed in the literature with regard to divergent contexts, social institutions, historical narratives, and geographical locations (e.g., Boissevain 1966; Davis 1977; Gellner 1977; Sharma 1985; Gilsenan 1996; Chaudhary 1999; Keating 2001; Shapira 2008). Some examples of power–dependence relations are: bureaucrats and clients in bureaucratic systems; husband and wife, and parent and child, in family frameworks; patron and client, and feudal lord and vassal, in politico-economic systems; patron and artist in cultural domains; and godfather and protégé in criminal networks.

The use of “patronage” in social analyses has been criticized by scholars (e.g., Gilsenan 1996) for masking the more significant aspects of the societies studied. However, I follow Stephen Lyon’s (2004) and Caroline Castiglione’s (2005) rejection of this claim and follow their claims that an analysis of a patron–client system can be used as an anthropological and analytic strategy that “renders comparison more feasible” (Lyon 2004: 8).<sup>2</sup> Rejecting Gilsenan’s criticisms, Lyon argues that eliminating “the notion of the dyadic, asymmetrical reciprocity of patronage for a more class-based analysis” would deprive social analysis “of a very important tool for understanding patron–client roles beyond the scope of landlord–peasant interaction.” Moreover, he suggests that patron–client systems, “should be understood as a system which operates around a set of roles rather than economic positions” (ibid.: 8).

In her book on nobles and villagers in Italian politics from 1640 to 1760, Castiglione reveals that the patron–client conceptual framework is a relevant and helpful analytic tool for drawing comparisons, even across historical periods, as long as mutual dependency and control is assumed. Both Castiglione and Lyon demonstrate the fact that the concept of patronage does not exclude the connotation of mutual power–dependence in the context of asymmetric power relations. Rather, the asymmetry in power relations emphasizes the informal, often unrecognized, and unacknowledged resources, tactics, mechanisms, and channels that are used by those who are perceived as powerless in formal power terms. In reference to James Scott’s (1985) analysis, Lyon argues that clients can “restrict their patrons’ demands. Patrons have public power mechanisms which are easily equated to the powers that the state tries to monopolize. Clients must rely on other power mechanisms which may go unacknowledged but which nevertheless may have considerable influence on behavior” (Lyon 2004: 8).

Although the terms patronage, paternalism, and patriarchy are rooted in and entail the connotations of male domination, nevertheless, the gender perspective has somehow been marginalized or even omitted from most studies of patronage. Thus, Herta Nöbauer suggests that “paternalism creates relationships based on authority and personal dependence.” This is “a (heterosexual) structure of (male) ‘patrons’ and (female) ‘clients’” (Nöbauer 2002: 115).<sup>3</sup> My analysis follows this important understanding, thus emphasizing the male discourse and dominance implicated in the gendered concept of patronage, as well as behind the women’s project I am discussing.

## Gender Activities within the Bhairahawa Lumbini Groundwater Project

I played the role of a patron during my stay in Nepal in August and September 1997. This image of myself as a patron was established at the outset of my stay in Nepal, staying with me throughout my visit, and it has dominated my retrospective reflections upon my visit there (cf. Shore 1999; Ben-Ari n.d.).

I arrived in Nepal as a gender consultant or expert in the employ of the Tahal Consulting Engineers Company.<sup>4</sup> Tahal hired me to work for them on a development project for women villagers in the region of the Bhairahawa Lumbini Groundwater Project. This irrigation project, which the World Bank financed with loans to the Nepali government, was launched in 1978, and it was aimed at increasing farmers' income by providing them with a year-round water supply. By drilling deep tube wells (DTWs) in this rural area of Nepal and distributing the water through open canals and underground pipes, a new irrigation system was introduced. It was expected that this improved, technologically advanced irrigation system would enable the farmers to diversify the range of crops they grew in the dry season and achieve higher yields per hectare. Moreover, it was assumed that the irrigation project would contribute to raising household income and standards of living (Tahal 1992). By the end of 1998, the process of transferring the irrigation project to local partners was to be completed.

In the mid 1990s, the World Bank was pressing the Nepali government to divert a small portion of the irrigation project budget (\$500,000) to women's empowerment programs. This action can probably be explained against the background of a growing awareness of, and emerging feminist trends in Western countries in regard to women's conditions around the world, and in Third World countries in particular. Thus, for instance, Josette Murphy suggests, in a World Bank document, that although efforts to bring out the "invisible" women in World Bank-funded projects started in the 1970s, "progress in moving from rhetoric to action remained slow until the mid-1980s" (Murphy 1995: 1). Nevertheless, the implementation of an operational policy on gender was approved only in April 1994. The 1995 United Nations' women's conference in Beijing, as well as other international UN conferences that took place during the International Decade for Women, might have had a significant impact on this growing feminist discourse and related policies (Murphy 1995; Levy 1996). A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) statement can serve to demonstrate the influence of this discourse in the Nepali context. It says: "UNDP supports the development of tools and mechanisms that enable Nepalese women to access, participate and benefit from equitable local planning and governance through programmes that are aimed at empowering women."<sup>5</sup>

In any event, at the beginning of the 1990s the heads of the World Bank were already issuing documents maintaining that investment in women might contribute to greater social change than had been achieved during the first two decades of development projects (World Bank 1990). They further suggested that ignoring women's needs, treating men as the main family providers, and

working exclusively with male officials had considerable ramifications for the family, the community, and the recipient country. Women's participation in development projects was depicted as essential for accelerating social change, because of their perceived role as mediators between the family and the community, and as having a crucial impact on children (Chowdhury 1995: 32). Development projects at the beginning of the 1990s emphasized the different needs of men and women. It was argued that since planned interventions should be responsive to the needs of the people, a gender dimension must be incorporated into development projects (Levy 1991; Moser 1993).

As a result of the pressures applied by the heads of the World Bank on the Nepali government and the directors of the irrigation project, Tahal decided to send an Israeli woman expert in gender and development to Nepal. This expert was expected to conduct a survey of women's needs in the irrigation project area and to suggest a program that would contribute to social change in the villages. Tovi Fenster, a social geographer by profession, came to Nepal in this role in the summer of 1996. She defined the goals of her proposed program thus: "to provide women (as well as men) in the Project area with skills and means to enable them to increase their standard of living" (Fenster 1996: 17). The target groups of her program were specified by Fenster quantitatively: "27,000 [women in the villages included in the proposed project] are at the ages of 10–65. This is the target population of this plan. This number consists of some 770 women groups (taken 35 women per group)" (ibid.: 17). The program included workshops on gender awareness for the irrigation project staff and a "development package," which would include: literacy programs for women, credit and saving programs, awareness-raising programs, skill-development programs, agricultural and animal-husbandry training, women's marketing groups, and the founding of a women's organization unit.

The following year I was hired by Tahal to continue Fenster's mission, and to implement the women empowerment program. My travel to Nepal was arranged only after the World Bank demanded of the directors of the Nepali Ministry of Agriculture and the local leaders of the irrigation project that they proceed with the gender activities program. A few weeks after my arrival in Nepal, Leon, Tahal's Israeli representative and team leader, told me that I was expected to deliver a report. This came as a surprise to me, because no mention of a report had been made before. Leon presented the request for a report as if it was a self-evident part of my project assignment. As I was acquainted with Tovi Fenster's report, which had been sent to me while still at home, I used her report as a starting point for mine. Thus, following Fenster, I defined the aims of the gender activities program as "increasing the income and economic power of the village women who are at least equal contributors to the village families' economy and to national agricultural production" (Hertzog 1997: 8). My report proposed that some 27,000 women in some thirty villages go through a program of literacy classes, followed by workshops in vocational training.

The following tells the story of the women's empowerment program (sometimes called the gender activities project<sup>6</sup>), the changes that it underwent, and the roles played by the various agencies that were directly and indirectly involved in it. The analysis will offer an explanation of why the women's project was never implemented and will investigate the question of whether it was ever meant to be implemented from the start. It will reveal how the rhetoric of gender development was manipulated by officials and organizations involved in the women's project to enhance their interests. More broadly, the gender activities project will be used to reflect on various aspects of power relations and patronizing conduct (in both, general and gendered terms) which develop around aid projects for developing countries.

### **Deceitful Hierarchy: Privileged Experts and Low-ranking Paraprofessionals**

The first thing I realized upon arrival at the airport in Kathmandu was that my social status was enhanced. I was now a privileged foreigner vis-à-vis most local Nepali citizens. When I left the airport, the driver of Tahal's Israeli representative was waiting for me. The driver had been obliged to return to the airport several times because, due to heavy rains, the flight had been delayed in Bombay for some twenty-four hours. Moreover, the driver had risked his safety, because of a merchants' and students' strike organized by the Maoists that took place at the time.<sup>7</sup>

I was chauffeured to a luxurious hotel in the center of Kathmandu, where I spent the night before flying on to Bhairahawa. That same night I learned that although the Nepali driver had treated me as a privileged boss I was not beyond reproach. Leon, Tahal's representative, called me and gave me a piece of his mind. He made it clear that I had misbehaved. As I had not phoned him nor my husband after landing in Nepal, the two of them had been communicating over the telephone and both were worried at my seeming disappearance.

The next thing I realized was that riding in a car with a driver distinguished between privileged people and others. When I first met Thapa, the Nepali head of the irrigation project, he promised that a car and a driver would be provided for my travel to the villages (to meet with women's groups who were slated to join the women's project). I felt uneasy with this offer. However, the fact that his promise was fulfilled only at a very late stage of my stay, during the last two weeks in Bhairahawa, also entailed some unpleasantness. It implied that my position was rather shaky, and therefore, Thapa did not feel obliged to provide me with a jeep and driver as soon as I started traveling between the villages. Yet, the fact that this advantage was eventually made available for me raises questions about a change in Thapa's attitude toward me. It was not clear whether this happened as a result of his growing trust in me, or as part of a power play between him and Leon. Giving me a jeep with a driver could have conveyed a latent message about who was the real boss of the women's project, and could

indicate that I was just as privileged as Leon. My being regarded as his equal was apparently rather humiliating for Leon. Indeed, whenever I accompanied Leon in “his” jeep, or when he traveled in “my” vehicle, he would always sit in the front seat, next to the driver, making me sit alone, sometimes with Anita (the local gender consultant), or sometimes with other project employees, in an overcrowded back seat accommodating more than three passengers.

Reflecting on my behavior during our many visits to the villages brings to mind several illuminating examples of my patron-like behavior. When in Bhairahawa, I visited fifteen villages within the region of the irrigation project. Anita Khanal, my Nepali colleague, accompanied me on all these visits. Obviously, I could not speak or understand any Nepali. Anita mediated between the local women and me, translating what they said, and what I said to them.

Although I opened and closed our meetings with the women villagers, responding to questions that were posed during the encounters, Anita would tell them about the women’s project in their own language. Usually she led the discussion that followed our presentation. She would encourage the women to ask questions and express their opinions about and expectations of the gender activities project, and after responding patiently to all the queries, and sometimes criticisms, she would ask them to sign their agreement to be included in the women’s program. Clad in traditional colorful gowns, similar to the ones worn by the women, appearing relaxed and self-confident but also humble and empathic, and smiling warmly at the women, Anita gained the women’s confidence and easily communicated with them. I watched her admiringly as she interacted with the women, often asking myself what I was doing there.

In all of our visits to the villages, we were joined by Women’s Groups Organizers (WGOs). The WGOs, who had usually completed a few years of schooling, were recruited from villages included in the irrigation project. Having much in common with the women villagers, familiarity with their ways of life, and often acquainted with them and their families, the WGOs possessed a substantial advantage in terms of their ability to convince the women villagers to sign up for the women’s program. In fact, the WGOs were “field workers” who carried out the most meaningful part of the program. They organized the groups of women in the villages whom we met later on, found a suitable location for the study classes we planned, and identified candidates for the role of literacy class teachers (the final decision was Anita’s and mine). The WGOs would also negotiate with the women over rental costs (of huts), salaries, and so on. The classrooms, offered by the village-women, ranged from dark mud-built houses, with tiny rooms and mud floors, to larger and brighter spaces constructed of brick. After Anita and I finished our part of the meeting, the WGOs would carry on talking with the women, circulating among them, approaching each one and persuading her to add her signature to the list of participants. A thumb print (in most cases) on the list expressed a woman’s consent and commitment to participate in the literacy class.

My own experience in training paraprofessional workers<sup>8</sup> in the Israeli welfare services from 1979 to 1983 (see Barasch 1986),<sup>9</sup> and my observations and analysis of the role of female instructors (*Somchot*)<sup>10</sup> of immigrants from Ethiopia (Hertzog 1999),<sup>11</sup> suggest some interesting similarities between WGOs in Nepal and Israeli paraprofessional workers. Both are, by and large, female “grassroots” (or “indigenous”) workers with limited education and professional skills, who are supervised by higher-ranking women professionals and/or male officials. Introducing the WGOs to the village women’s program drew on a similar approach. They were assumed to serve as role models for the village women, as their relationships with them were based on socioeconomic similarities.

I suggest that while the WGOs were offered an opportunity to become part (however low-ranked) of the bureaucratic system, and enjoy its advantages, they were also expected to represent the irrigation project and the organizations behind it (the Ministry of Agriculture in particular) and their contribution to village women’s empowerment. Employing paraprofessional workers entailed low costs for the irrigation project, while it generated the benefit of looking good in terms of enhancing women’s opportunities in more prestigious, semi-professional occupations, which the WGOs could not enjoy without the women’s program. Moreover, since the program did not materialize and even the literacy classes were not opened up, the irrigation project’s management could get rid of these women very easily and cheaply. Thus, Weber’s argument that, “No machinery in the world functions ... so cheaply” as bureaucratic hierarchy (Weber 1978: lix), gains support in the context of the irrigation project.

Apart from generating effective relationships with the groups of women, encouraging them to trust the irrigation and the women projects’ staff and forming the learning groups, the WGOs served to create an impression that things were working as planned and that the gender activities program was on its way to achieving “a successful result,” as defined by Cris Shore and Susan Wright, who contend that organizations are interested in making “fragmented activities appear coherent, so it can be claimed that an intention has been realized and a successful result achieved” (Shore and Wright 1997: 5).

Despite the substantial contribution of the WGOs to the gender activities program, they were considered to be low-ranking staff and were paid poorly. In contrast, despite my ineffective activity, my poor skills in terms of language, and my lack of relevant background knowledge on Nepal, development, and so on, I was regarded and treated as a VIP, enjoyed a prestigious position and role, and was rewarded accordingly: I was “an expert” (Hancock 1989; Yunus 1998; Maiava 2001; Mosse 2005).

Hence, it appears that “office hierarchy” produces machinery that works very cheaply, as Weber suggests, but not so much as a result of the “expert training” and “a functional specialization” upon which “bureaucracy rests” (Weber 1948: 229). The bureaucracy’s success at working very cheaply (and “efficiently”) was rather the outcome of employing poorly rewarded (in terms of status, authority,

and salary) but highly competent (in terms of suitability and adaptability to relevant organizational aims, vis-à-vis their clients) local workers.

This understanding is equally relevant with regard to the “village teachers,” who were women with only a little more education than the other women in their villages. They may have had between five to eight years of schooling and could be as young as fifteen. However, the village teachers’ social proximity, like that of the WGOs, to the women “students” or “clients” was found by the irrigation project staff to be very fruitful for the purpose of working with the village women, creating social networks and transmitting their knowledge to them. Contrary to their significant contribution to the organization’s aims, the village teachers, like the WGOs, were positioned at the lowest level of the women project’s hierarchy, below the WGOs (and paid less than them), and close to the village women.

The advantages of the social proximity between paraprofessional indigenous workers and other people in their neighborhoods, social networks, families, and so on, have been recognized by many social-care organizations. These indigenous workers have been gradually mobilized since the 1960s for the sake of “helping” needy, deprived, deviant, and other clienteles, in contexts such as family therapy, rehabilitating delinquents, teaching assistants, social-work aids, mental health supporters, in-home caregivers, peripheral communities health instruction, and so on (Umbarger 1972; Andrade and Burstein 1973; Etgar 1977; Neipris 1984; Maruna and LeBel 2003).<sup>12</sup> Employing paraprofessional workers in welfare, educational, health, and other social services is introduced into socioeconomically deprived groups and communities in the name of promoting social change. I suggest that while offering local people minor opportunities for social mobility, the stratified hierarchy of social agencies contributes to the power of professionals within it. I would argue further that employing paraprofessional workers benefits social-service systems, and the professionals within them in particular. This practice provides the latter with enlarged authority over subordinate workers, who at the same time serve to absorb social tensions which the professionals and their organizations are designed to alleviate.

The exploitation of paraprofessional workers is rarely acknowledged. One example of criticism is Mark Hunter’s article about social-care paraprofessionals (Hunter 2008). Hunter discusses recent developments regarding the “huge swathes of public service that were once the preserve of highly trained professionals, now being carried out by less qualified support staff.” He wonders:

So will the creation of ever-more paraprofessional roles do what it is meant to do—help ease the pressure on overworked qualified practitioners, freeing them from the more mundane of their duties to concentrate on providing quality service in the areas that matter most? Or is it just a stunt to fob the public off with a cut-price service, provided by unqualified, underpaid assistants ready to be made the scapegoats the minute anything goes wrong? (ibid.)



Nevertheless, it has not been claimed, at least not in the domain of social-care services, that this category of workers can provide “unprofessional” services that are in fact more productive and helpful than those of professionals. That is, “professionalism” pretends (or “presents itself,” in Goffman’s words) to offer services based on acquired knowledge and training, whereas people with limited or no professional training can provide the same or even more relevant services. Moreover, professionals would act in a way that presents their performance as a “sufficiently complex and vital task to justify giving” to those who perform it “the ceremonial and financial reward given to” professionals (Goffman 1959: 28).<sup>13</sup> Thus, paraprofessional workers serve organizations in economic terms, providing low-paid services and, in professional terms, promoting “social inclusion” (Harris 2004), pretending to enhance local or indigenous groups’ participation in the running of their communities.

## **The Compelling Power and Appealing Advantages of the Consultant’s Position**

On some of our visits to the irrigation project’s villages, one or more of the male Association Organizers (AOs) joined us. They would sit on the side and hardly interact with the women attending the meetings. From time to time, a higher-ranking official from the irrigation project staff joined us. On each of the visits some twenty to thirty women attended, sometimes as many as forty. The meetings would typically take place under a tree. In hot weather, under conditions of almost 100 per cent humidity, we would sit on shaky old metal bed frames with straw mattresses, or on the ground. Often a few men and some children gathered around, and sometimes the women held babies in their arms. Livestock wandering around was also part of the scenery.

Very soon I became used to being driven around in the irrigation project’s jeep with Anita and the WGOs.<sup>14</sup> It soon felt almost natural to be treated as an all-knowing expert who took center stage at events. Upon arrival, which often occurred later than scheduled, I was immediately offered the best seat by local women as well as by Anita and the WGOs. I had become a privileged person, “encapsulated” (Chambers 1983: 12) in luxurious advantages, such as being chauffeured around and accommodated in a guesthouse (something which it was impossible to reject), and I accepted the gestures bestowed, or rather imposed, on me.

This was my first trip to Nepal. Most of what I knew about Nepal and developing countries was from reading Tovi Fenster’s report. I could not speak Nepali and dressed differently from the local women. The fact that I was constantly “observing” the encounters and taking notes, while Anita and the WGOs were busy interacting with the women, emphasized further (unconsciously, perhaps) my physical and verbal otherness. I was probably perceived not only as different looking but also as being distant and preoccupied with other (personal) activities.

One day I was made aware of the impact my conduct had on my surroundings when Raju, Leon's competent secretary, joined us on our tour round the villages. At a certain point he turned to me and suggested that I should write something down. I was rather embarrassed at being caught writing my field-notes (which I was doing for my own research purposes, rather than for the women program's sake) and it was only then that I realized my distanced-observer position in that context. Moreover, I realized that I was being observed by other participants in the encounters, and that they were well aware of me documenting what was going on. They might have assumed that I was reporting to "others" in "higher" places what was being said in the meetings. It is also possible that the women were used to meeting "project people," whether foreigners or locals, who took notes while interacting with them, for purposes of surveys, censuses, and so forth. Looking back on that incident it appears to me that I might have felt guilty for using my visit to the villages for my own needs rather than being fully occupied with my assignment. Thus, while Raju and others were probably accustomed to being observed by guests, developers, donors, and/or researchers who would, sometimes, take notes, I was not aware of this and, therefore, assumed that I was "caught" doing something wrong.

It appears, therefore, that assuming the role of an expert, complying with a privileged status and benefits, behaving unconsciously with stereotypic disregard for village people, are unavoidable outcomes of being involved in a hierarchical and bureaucratic setting. This context dictates social roles, expectations, performances, advantages (or disadvantages), and, moreover, the relative positioning of individuals as being affiliated with constructed, stratified categories. It could be argued that the bureaucratic setting imposes codes of conduct on the individual and compels them (me in this case) in a way that does not permit them to "squirm out of the apparatus" in which they are "harnessed" (Weber 1948: 228). However, my ethnography suggests that although social roles and relations are imposed on the individual, they take an active role and join the social encounter willingly and deliberately. That is, the individual is not a mere "cog" in the system. They are also an active player in the social encounter in which they participate. Thus, complying with my distanced, privileged status as a "foreign expert" was unavoidable, but becoming a distanced observer, or an "anthropologist," was done deliberately.

## **Manufacturing the Image of a Gender Expert**

Playing the role of an expert in a women's economic empowerment project cast me in the role of a benevolent foreigner. One of the ways in which I presented myself as a caring consultant on my first visit to the villages was by expressing my enthusiasm for the village women's handicrafts. Examining my extensive efforts "to demonstrate [my] professional competence" (Mosse 2005: 26), and to be perceived by the village women and irrigation project staff as a gender expert, demonstrates how I strived "to live up the mask" that represented "the

self” that I wanted to be (Robert Park, quoted in Goffman 1959: 19). Thus, as Goffman suggests, the “front” of my “performance” during my visits in the villages was aimed at defining “the situation for those who observe[d] the performance” (ibid.: 22). My continuous performance of my role as a gender expert ended well, as it became my “second nature and an integral part of [my] personality” (Park, in ibid.: 19–20). I certainly came to believe that my intentions were idealistic and my expertise was evident.

On my first visit to the villages, some five days after my arrival in Nepal, Leon, two WGOs, Pandit (head of the Farmer Organization Division, and the AOs’ and the WGOs’ coordinator), and I drove to Khurmundihawa, where we met Manju, a third WGO. When we completed the procedures concerning the literacy classes, I asked to see the women’s handicrafts. Soon a few big straw baskets and woolen articles were laid in front of us. The women were very excited to show us their handiwork and the children helped them bring out more objects. Anita asked the women about prices of materials, and they replied that the cost was between 100 and 500 rupees<sup>15</sup> per basket, depending on size.

In the second village I visited, West Bharaulia, a similar event was repeated. I asked to see the women’s handicrafts, and again the women and children happily brought out many broad, rounded, and flat baskets of different sizes and shapes. The women explained, in both villages, that the hand-made baskets and woolen articles were intended for their daughters’ dowries. However, one woman offered to make a basket for Anita, requesting 100 rupees<sup>16</sup> for the materials.

I revealed my interest in these straw handicrafts repeatedly and persistently by asking many questions about weaving techniques and the materials the baskets were made from, the provenance of the materials, their prices, and so on. Indeed, I also offered to buy some of them. To draw attention to my professional interest, at a very early stage of my visits to the villages, I made suggestions to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives involving straw handicrafts. I included this “original” idea among the recommendations in my final report to the heads of the irrigation project. I also discussed my thoughts about the potential economic value of the women’s expertise with Thapa, the Nepali manager of the irrigation project. It appeared that Thapa had his own opinions. He explained that similar ideas had been proposed in the past, but these were found to be unworkable because of the villagers’ distance from markets (which made traveling far too difficult and expensive), and also because the low prices paid for the objects made their sale unprofitable. However, this explanation did not put me off, and I compromised by accepting Thapa’s suggestion to look out for nearby market sites, instead of Kathmandu.

Toying with this idea of developing a simple money-generating source for the “poor women in the villages” led me to discuss it with Hanna, Leon’s wife. While accompanying her husband on his overseas assignments, Hanna had ample opportunity to purchase numerous handcrafted articles. Consequently, she had become an “expert” on Nepali and other South Asian handicrafts. I

suggested that Hanna take on a role in the women's project, mediating between the women who produced the baskets and traders in handcraft shops in Kathmandu. She seemed to like the idea and to respect my "professional" initiative. I also discussed with Anita the possibility of developing some kind of marketing initiative as an outlet for the village women's basket ware. I could not be sure if Hanna and Anita really approved of my ideas or were just being polite (they might have felt nothing would come of them). Their response can also be understood as a generous face-saving exercise, supporting me in my efforts to create for myself the image of an expert. Removing my mask of expertise would have left me "caught in a misrepresentation" (Goffman 1959: 244), and would have humiliated me.

The village women themselves, as noted above, did not think it was a good idea to commercialize their handiwork because the basket ware was used for traditional purposes. However, whether my plan was realistic or a flight of fantasy, my eagerness to advance the basket ware business turned out to be useful for my purposes. When, following Leon's advise, I mentioned to Thapa that the search for a potential market in Kathmandu necessitated a weekend visit to the capital in the middle of my visit to Nepal, Thapa authorized it eventually, albeit unwillingly. Thapa quite probably assumed that traveling to Kathmandu amounted to an unacceptable privilege.

On that visit I went to a few handicraft shops in Kathmandu and inquired about potential prices for each kind of basket, and about marketing techniques. Upon my return to Bhairahawa I told Pandit enthusiastically about my inquiries, telling him that one of the shopkeepers had agreed to sell the first twenty items for \$1 per small basket. I also suggested putting Manju, an energetic and smart young WGO, who knew some English, in charge of the initiative. Pandit seemed either to like the idea, or he was being careful not to offend me by casting doubts over my enthusiastic suggestion. Anita added a few points on the subject and mentioned that her friends had suggested a few years ago a similar idea. Hanna's name was brought up as someone who had many contacts, and who could contribute to carrying out the handicrafts project. Thus, unwittingly, I developed the issue of handicraft enterprises into a social affair, drawing an increasing number of people into it, while becoming the center of these encounters.

My written report, submitted to the heads of the irrigation project in Israel and Nepal a few days after my return to Israel, also reveals my self-presentation as an expert in developing women's enterprises. In it I wrote:

Handicrafts Project: Visiting the project area together with Mrs Khanal (local consultant) and women's groups organizers (WGOs), we noticed the great potential of developing existing traditional skills, which are widely practiced (handicraft production in particular). We have seen some beautiful straw baskets, decorative wool works, etc. No extra training is needed (not at this stage, in any case), but what is required to gradually build an income-generating

project chiefly are: a coordinator, marketing training and purchase of materials. One year at least of financial support for hiring a coordinator, coordinator's travel fares, and material costs ... [- are needed]. (Hertzog 1997: 9).

It appears that the handicraft enterprise was used by me as "a sign equipment" and as a way to "dramatize my work" (Goffman 1959: 30–34), to convince my counterparts of my professional skills, and to present myself before them in a way that "incorporates and exemplifies the officially accredited values of the [institution]" (ibid.: 34).

## A Tourist in Disguise

Taking photographs was a regular activity of mine during my stay in Nepal, and on the visits to the villages in particular. This activity, which had nothing to do with any professional need concerning my role as a gender development consultant, exposed my hidden urge to make sure that exotic and unfamiliar impressions would be preserved for my own benefit. Being continuously occupied by looking for attractive photo opportunities, I certainly did not behave as a professional expert. This conduct, along with my note taking, meant that I was either acting as an anthropologist, collecting information for my study, or as a tourist, interested in commemorating adventures and impressions related to the local people and scenery. It could also mean that I was doing both, combining anthropological fieldwork with enjoyable trips to Nepali villages. But this kind of conduct is hardly in line with conventional expectations about how experts work. Thus, Chambers's definition of "urban-based professionals" who are involved in "rural development tourism, the phenomenon of the brief rural visit" (Chambers 1983: 10), could be applied to me. David Mosse similarly points to the questionable basis of foreign consultants' knowledge which derives "from short visits after long journeys, [and] sleepless passage through airports" (Mosse 2005: 133).

I took pictures in every village I went to. I particularly liked the pictures in which the women and I were sitting on the ground. Anita was aware of my obsession and often offered to take pictures of the women villagers together with me. My field notes disclose that I was well aware of the hierarchal distance that was established when I was taking pictures of the ongoing interactions. When we were in West Bharaulia we went to see the room that had been suggested as a site for the women's literacy class. It was a small, dark mud hut, used in the mornings for UNICEF children's classes. I wrote in my notes "to my deep shame I was asking to take pictures of myself with the children."

On another occasion, while visiting a school in Shikton, I was photographed with a few schoolchildren, posing like a typical foreign tourist. The children, like the adults, did not object to being photographed by me. Moreover, they complied and cooperated with this intrusion, and "put on their best face and receive[d] the visitor well" (Chambers 1983: 12).<sup>17</sup> Thus, for instance, while I

was taking pictures in a class, one of the school girls read for me quietly, without being asked, probably assuming that I would like to take her picture as she was reading. It seemed as though she was accustomed to foreigners visiting, asking questions, and taking photos, and she was aware of what was expected of her. However, my fieldnotes clarify that I felt ashamed for behaving like a voyeuristic tourist (cf. *ibid.*: 10).

Taking pictures on these occasions illustrates how foreigners, who invade local people's daily life, impose themselves in such encounters. This recurrent situation was in fact a one-sided social encounter, as pictures of the local people were taken then spirited away, serving the visitors, myself in this case, for their own needs. Although in the beginning I asked Anita to request permission to take pictures, later on I took photographs anywhere I liked without feeling obliged to ask for people's consent. In any case, even if consent had been granted, it would not change the hierarchical social distance that was embedded in these unequal situations. In such encounters there is one person (me, in this case) who owns a piece of property—a camera—which is quite expensive by local-village standards. The same person determines how the pictures are taken, their background, framing, and so on. Most importantly, this person takes others' pictures away with them, and in most cases does not send the pictures back to those they have photographed. Certainly none of this would occur the other way round.

The local people did not object to being photographed; often they even seemed to enjoy it and willingly cooperated. However, I tend to think that in these situations they behaved in a way like a captive audience, either because they did not dare to refuse the "VIP" outsiders, or simply because they did not want to offend them. However, even if the villagers enjoyed being the focus of the outsiders' attention, from the latter's point of view it meant that the local people served as objects for their (my) own purposes. It is also possible that the women villagers expected to gain some advantage from these interactions. Clearly, my position as a tourist who returns to her country, family, and friends, and can pride herself in showing such attractive pictures, entailed various social benefits. The pictures could also be used for publications, an even more valuable reward in social terms.

Comparing my Nepali experience to my study of Ethiopian immigrants in an Israeli absorption center (Hertzog 1999), it appears that taking pictures of people in the villages implied a position of power over the situation. Similarly, the American tourists I observed in Israel, who were potential donors to the absorbing agencies, were brought regularly on buses to see the "invaluable and hard work" of the officials with the "vulnerable", "needy" immigrants from Africa. The objectification of people in such situations is reflected in a quote by the center's director, who described the visitors' attitude toward the immigrants as follows: "all they are interested in is to take photos of the zoo." The director was expressing his disapproval of the tourists' behavior and his disgruntlement about the extra work these visits imposed on him, as well as reservations about

their low level of interest in the topic of absorption as such. However, his words exposed the latent connotation of animal-watching in that context, which dehumanized the immigrants.

This example is relevant to the context of my visits to the Nepali villages in the irrigation project area, as it also entailed observing others collectively and perceiving them as extremely different from “us.” “They,” the villagers, were regarded and talked about as exotic human beings in a manner that implied their primitivism. My written descriptions of the scenes and people in the villages often reveal this kind of latent ethnocentricity. Thus, for example, my fieldnotes often dwell on the muddy huts and their surroundings, implying dirt, neglect, and poverty. Following other ethnographic studies (e.g., Shachak 1985; Hertzog 2010b; Mosse 2005), I suggest that attributing uncleanness, disease, drunkenness, and the like collectively to people, introduces social distance through negative stigmatization. The clean/dirty binary corresponds with other perceived oppositions, such as modern/primitive, and advanced/backward.<sup>18</sup>

## The Professional Caretaker

In addition to their development expertise, caring for poor, disadvantaged people is often perceived as necessary part of the consultant’s persona. Thus, to be qualified for working with aid agencies and aid projects one is expected to have both a professional background in fields such as education, economics, nursing, social work, medicine, agriculture, and so on, and to be committed to “helping” and “instructing.” In Goffman’s terms, it can be said that I offered my observers “an impression that is idealized,” reaffirming “the moral values of the community” (Goffman 1959: 35). Moreover, as Goffman suggests, this “presentation of idealized performances” (ibid.: 36) is widely associated with social mobility in stratified societies. In most stratified societies “there is an idealization of the higher strata” (ibid.: 36), and efforts to move upward and efforts to keep from moving downward involve sacrifices “made for the maintenance of front” (ibid.: 36). Thus, presenting myself as both professional and caring served my endeavor to convince my audience of my relevant skills and social commitment.

Like many other consultants, volunteers, NGO and development organization workers, I assumed this double role as soon as I entered the irrigation project site in Bhairahawa. Concerning myself with the empowerment of women became my proclaimed expertise alongside my human and feminist deep commitment (which, in fact, had been part of my feminist identity for many years). The role of a caring expert in women’s affairs was embedded in all my encounters during my stay in Nepal. Acting as a representative of women’s interests was an inseparable part of every encounter with officials in and outside the irrigation project, of my various social engagements and, indeed, of the meetings with the women villagers.

This professional, caring identity was at the fore at a meeting which Anita, three WGOs, and I held with three local officials from the veterinary ministry

in their office. We came to talk about the animal husbandry training program for the village women, which formed part of their literacy classes. After summarizing the program, which focused mainly on husbandry and health instruction, and after presenting the budget to the three male ministry officials, one of them asked us to stay for tea. I replied that “Anita is the boss and she decides.” The laughter of all the participants spoke volumes of who really was considered to be the “boss.” The men asked again, and Anita agreed to stay for tea. When all were quiet I started “to explain” the gender activities project.

Elaborating on the potential influence of the literacy classes on some 9,000 women and on their social surroundings, I demonstrated both my mastery of the subject and my concern for women’s empowerment. When I realized that I had taken over the conversation, I apologized for “lecturing.” Anita commented half jokingly that talking was my profession, and that I was doing it well. It appears that I had assumed the role of representing the women’s project, although I had only become acquainted with it a few weeks earlier and was, practically speaking, an outsider to the place and to the women’s project. Moreover, although Anita and the WGOs were much more familiar with the project than me, none of them tried to speak about it. They behaved as if it was natural or self-evident that I should represent the women’s project.

My focus on women’s affairs colored the whole conversation. Hence, when Anita did speak, she asked the officials if women had ever participated in vocational training courses organized by the ministry. One of them responded that only a few women had participated in such courses. His reply provoked me to “lecture” again. This time I was indirectly reprimanding the officials. I said: “Why have not more women been included in these courses? Are the women not the ones who do most of the work in the fields?! Why should they not be included in the training just like the men?” The man replied, “this is because of the culture.” That reaction elicited open criticism on my part, and I referred to my study of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. I explained to them that Israeli officials had used the rationale of the immigrants’ culture to justify their discriminating practices in relation to women’s vocational training opportunities. I argued that these claims were not substantiated by facts, as in Ethiopia women worked in both the fields and in their homes. “Denying women the opportunity to undertake vocational training meant, in fact, their discrimination”, I stated, and the men agreed (perhaps out of politeness). The fact that the men seemed to agree with me encouraged my outspoken preaching, and thus I suggested: “It is in the hands of state officials who are in charge and in control over budgets and who are authorized to recruit people to training courses. They can decide that 50 per cent of all participants will be women and they are able to implement it.”

My extensive efforts to enforce the implementation of literacy classes also afforded me with countless opportunities to display both my gender expertise and my feminist devotion. As none of the 900 literacy classes commenced



before I left Nepal, I became a nag, continuously, although carefully, pestering the heads of the irrigation project to implement the classes. But it became clear to me from a very early point in my visit that the local heads of the irrigation project were not keen to begin the classes. They would rather have them implemented, at most, on a limited scale. Insisting that the proposed budget be sent to his superiors in the government and to the World Bank for approval, and that the training courses (seminars) for village teachers be started at once, were part of the daily pressure I exerted on Thapa, on other local officials in the irrigation project, and on Leon, Tahal's representative.

Only much later, when I looked back at my fieldnotes, did I fully realize that they had all cooperated in ensuring the postponement of the literacy program (and, consequently, of the whole gender activities program) to the point that it would not happen. This late revelation could imply that throughout my stay in Nepal I was reluctant to admit that the irrigation project's leadership objected to implementing the women's program, as this would have implied the end of my mission there. Ignoring the signs of rejection could also have been the outcome of the successfully misleading performance of the irrigation project's heads, working as a team marked by familiarity, solidarity, and common secrecy, making sure that "secrets that could give the show away are shared and kept" (Goffman 1959: 238).<sup>19</sup> While they were pretending to show interest in the women's program, and confidence in my professional performance, they might have been pulling strings behind my back to bring about the program's termination.

The frustration and disappointment I felt appear to be a common experience of foreign experts in the wider context of development projects. This understanding emerges, for instance, from David Mosse's study of a British aid project in rural India. For example, Mosse writes that "members of our consultancy team universally expressed frustration at their inability to have any influence over project practice" (Mosse 2005: 135). Mosse suggests distinguishing between "project practice" and "policy theory." Thus, while foreign experts' practice can evidently be considered a failure, the production of "project models of great clarity for the donor (and beyond)" can be claimed to be successful (*ibid.*: 135). I contend, however, that this dialectic argument can be better understood as being about bureaucracy and bureaucrats' success. That is, bureaucratic power (of donors, aid agencies, governmental departments, and so on) effectively and elegantly overcomes the efforts of professional foreigners to bring about any significant social change. It manipulates experts and turns them into collaborators who are compensated for their efforts in terms of material advantages (such as travel and wages) and, indirectly, by mobility in their academic careers. Moreover, these experts are not really needed for bringing about social change but rather for the purpose of refraining from it, by focusing on "a huge number of visit reports, progress reports, annual reports" (*ibid.*: 134). This is what transpired in my experience.

## In the Name of Women's Empowerment

One of the excuses used to postpone the implementation of the women's project, while concealing this intention from me, was a demand that the village teachers, who were invited to participate in a preparatory seminar, provide their husbands' or fathers' written consent. When I talked with Pandit and Gupta, some three weeks after my arrival in Nepal, about starting seminars for village teachers the next day, the two reacted with complete surprise and started talking between themselves in Nepali. Their conversation went on for some time, and after waiting patiently I asked them if there was a problem. They explained that forms of consent and commitment for attending the seminars regularly must be signed before they began and that this would take some time. They then went on talking again in Nepali. When I asked why not have the women sign the forms when they arrive on the first day of the seminar, they explained that it was not clear that the women would show up at all and that there was a chance that the women might not be allowed to come. Therefore, they would all have to be notified again.

Surprised but also disappointed, and to a degree resentful, I argued that all of the women had been notified already and that all of them had agreed to participate in the seminar. The discussion continued, and the two men turned to talk with Anita in Nepali. The two WGOs, present in the room, were listening and smiling now and again, probably when jokes were made (naturally, I wondered if they were at my expense).

It appears, then, that my seemingly superior position as a foreign consultant, representing the Israeli irrigation company, professionally responsible for a program which enjoyed the support of the World Bank, did not entail me being able to implement the program when confronting reluctant local officials. At most, polite gestures were made and superficial respect afforded, but not much beyond that. This became evident when one morning I entered Pandit's room, which was crowded with the irrigation project's employees (including the WGOs), as usual. Everyone, except for three WGOs, left the room. Anita got off her chair and went to share a chair with one of the WGOs. Next, another WGO got off her chair and left it for me. Despite the superficial respect I enjoyed, it became apparent that in practice the local people and I, the outsider, were on opposite sides. Even the women, who were supposed to be interested in getting the women's seminar and literacy classes up and running, seemed to join forces with the men. They did not express any objection, at least not openly, about the postponement of the courses. This could be explained by the fact that the men were their direct employers. Also, their Nepali male superiors were there to stay, whereas I was just passing through.

Eventually my campaign had a certain impact, and a date for starting the seminar was suggested; nevertheless I expressed my disappointment. Anita asked: "Is it not good that the Seminar will begin next week?" I replied instantly: "It is not good because I shall not be here when the literacy classes start." I meant that if the ten-day seminar ended later than I had planned, the literacy classes

which were to follow would not begin while I was still in Nepal. Thus, the delay in beginning the seminar would prevent me from attending the opening of the first twenty literacy classes.<sup>20</sup> We entered lengthy negotiations, and I cautiously demanded that the earliest possible date be set for the start of the seminar. The men consulted between themselves and with Anita (in Nepali) while examining the Nepali calendar on the wall. When they suggested starting on Sunday, I expressed my disappointment. After checking other options they agreed to run the seminar on the Saturdays as well, which is the day of rest in Nepal. Eventually, in an attempt to please me, they suggested starting on Thursday. That was the best deal I managed to strike. They concluded the debate, saying “now it is necessary to go to the villages, to talk to each and every one of the village teachers and with those responsible for them and sign them up.”

Applying pressure to start the seminar and literacy classes was indeed part of my self-presentation as a devoted professional and feminist. Yet, it appears in retrospect that my primary concerns were my own constraints and needs, such as my flight schedule on the one hand and a need to show tangible results to my employers on the other, although they did not really care about the implementation of the women’s project (as I suggested earlier). I did not object to the suggestion of including Saturday as a study day for the village teachers. Yet, as a feminist, I should probably have been aware of the extra burden these intensive studies would put on the women, who had to come all the way from their villages to the irrigation project center in Bhairahawa.

This relative achievement did not satisfy me, and I went on playing the feminist role and raising “provocative” questions. I asked Pandit and Gupta: “Why should guardians sign for the women instead of the women signing for themselves, why is it not enough that the women sign the consent and commitment form? Is it not the purpose of the women’s project to empower women and to relate to them as independent persons?” Gupta explained to me patiently and gently: “Here the social structure is different from that in Israel, and here the parents and the husband must give their consent for women’s work, otherwise there are going to be problems. The woman may get married and go to her husband’s place and stop working. But if the parents are responsible they will make sure that she conforms to her commitments. It is necessary to explain to the parents that their daughters will be paid some money and then they will understand the importance of the issue.” I asked Gupta if the same applied to boys. Gupta replied that it is not the case with boys unless they are less than eighteen years old. I tried to push my agenda further and said: “You are the ones who decide on the matter, of course, but why not follow the same practice with girls as for boys, and in this way the women’s project will contribute to promoting social change?” He repeated his explanations very patiently. Although I realized that I had lost the case, I asked again: “What will be done if the woman quits teaching despite having her own and her husband’s or father’s signature? Will she be sued?” The two men smiled and dismissed that option. In the end I retreated, saying: “Ultimately you know very well what is hap-

pening and indeed you are the ones who decide what should be done.” The outcome of the consent-form affair seemed to sort itself out shortly after Anita spoke with the irrigation project accountant. She informed me that the consent forms were only a formality, and that the women teachers themselves would sign the forms of commitment to teach upon their arrival at the seminar.

The requirement of consent by male guardians appeared to serve as an excuse for local heads of the irrigation project to delay the opening of the seminar, following which the whole women’s project could easily be postponed and then canceled. Once the officials were sure that only one seminar would be held (and that by the time it ended I would be gone), they could give way to my pressures. Moreover, as the only seminar that was to be implemented necessitated a very small budget, the “traditional,” “cultural” explanations were rendered unnecessary, and that is probably why the officials relaxed the requirement about male guardians’ signatures. If this is true, it implies that the insistence on acquiring the father’s or husband’s signature was a tactic used to deal with my pressures, and that the real reason for the officials’ objections to the implementation of the women’s project was disguised.

This understanding should not come as a surprise, as cultural and/or traditional narratives are widely assumed as self-evident, and therefore are easy to manipulate (Hertzog 2001).<sup>21</sup> The use of culture and tradition as an explanation to justify the postponement of the women’s program demonstrates how male officials ensured their ongoing control over resources, policies, and discourse. Confronting my efforts to carry out the women’s program, or even to become part of the decision-making team, they managed to exclude me by using the Nepali language in my presence, and by indicating that I was an outsider who was not familiar with local customs and social norms. Similarly, Mosse argues that labeling knowledge as Western serves local project staff as a strategy “for handling foreign experts and keeping [them at a] distance” (Mosse 2005: 133–34) when they want to reject foreign experts’ knowledge. I suggest that more rather striving to reject foreign experts’ knowledge, the local staff is interested in rejecting the foreign experts themselves, and probably in expressing latent reservations with regard to foreign experts’ interventions.

Nevertheless, the point I wish to stress is my ongoing application of pressure and my repeated attempts at bargaining so as to ensure the start of the literacy classes, in the name of the women’s empowerment. I identified with and adopted the role of a women villagers’ advocate: I stood up for them, and faced local males in authoritative positions who obstinately objected to projects intended to serve the women. In the name of professionalism and feminism, I became a nuisance to the local officials, who had to put up with my pressurizing only as long as I was present in the region.

## Confronting Men's Chauvinism

Despite the fact that the problem of the consent form seemed to have been resolved, the following day it transpired that this was not the case. The ongoing encounters concerning the disputed forms afforded another opportunity to display my professional and feminist stance. A couple of days later, when Anita and I went down to Pandit's room to find out if everything was ready for the seminar, Anita showed me two forms which had been signed by village teachers and their husbands. She also said that Gupta had spoken to three other village teachers and their husbands, but had not secured their signatures yet. When I discovered that things were going in the "wrong" direction, I said to Pandit: "I wish to state my protest." In reply, Pandit again used sociocultural jargon and said: "We are talking about a social structure in which the husband domineers and the wife is dominated." I replied:

Yet, it is in our control, at least to some extent. We know that we have some power and influence. If we ask only the women to sign the forms of commitment, quite probably no one will ask us why we did not ask the husbands or fathers to sign them. It is likely that the men don't even think about having to sign the forms. And besides, they are not stupid and they also know that it is just a matter of formality and has no real meaning in any case, whether the husband signs the form or both husband and wife sign it.

In stating my wish to protest, my patronizing "professional" position was expressed antagonistically. However, it is apparent that as much as I was shown respect for my professional positions as a gender consultant, in fact, the local officials carried out only what suited them, and did not hesitate in changing decisions regardless of what they had promised and agreed upon. They endured minor demands of mine, those which they perceived as temporarily unavoidable but which could be changed later on.

I succeeded, however, in forcing many officials to discuss the gender implications of having males sign the commitment form. Following Pandit's explanations concerning the requirement that men approve the women's participation in the seminar, Anita commented that she was surprised about this state of affairs. She stated that things were quite different in Kathmandu (where her family and permanent home were). Pandit then asked her why she had said nothing about the matter before. I said that she had not been given a chance to react, and that they (the men) had decided on the matter. Pandit reacted defensively to my criticism and asked Anita if she was obliged to ask her husband for his permission to come out to Bhairahawa. She admitted that she did ask for her husband's approval and Pandit looked triumphant.

Not wanting discussion of the subject to end here, I asked what would have happened in the reverse case: Would her husband have to ask for her permission? Anita replied that her husband would have told her that he was going

away. Then I admitted: “In Israel, too, the wife is normally the one to ask, explain, and beg for permission, and the husband would just announce that he is going away as a matter of fact. But this is different in every case and depends on the couple’s relationship and it is also relative to specific situations and places.” Using comparisons with Israeli society in particular was a favourite means of mine to convey my arguments and my “professional” approach. This enabled me to introduce “advanced” feminist attitudes from a presumably more equal and less ethnocentric position. However, from the officials’ reactions it was apparent that this tactic did not fool them. They still seemed to think that I was referring to some irrelevant context, very different from their own. Their reactions were apologetic and evasive, pointing to their own social context as totally different from mine. The modern versus traditional opposition was thus implied in those conversations, both by the local officials and myself.

The intense conflict over consent forms demonstrates clearly that the senior male officials had their way. No technique or calculated strategy that I employed had any bearing on the outcome. This happened regardless of whether my verbal, practical, professional, or any other kind of performance, was skilful or poor. This conclusion emerges clearly from other studies of gender projects in the context of development (e.g., Chambers 1983; Oxby 1983; Gurung 1994; Kabeer 1999; Mosse 2005).

## **Patronizing Anita**

Taking on the role of tutor to Anita was another way of displaying my professional superiority. This became apparent during a conversation we had about the consent form. We were eating sweet yogurt in a local restaurant where we used to sometimes go after our meetings with the irrigation project’s officials or people from other offices. Anita referred to the demand for a male’s signature on the form, and expressed her surprise again. I replied:

It is very important to insist on your position and to stick to one’s principles. This is something I’ve learned from my experience in struggling for women’s equality. I learned that we have to insist and not give up, without getting overexcited or aggressive, but nevertheless to stick to one’s principles and aims. The surrounding society, those in powerful positions in particular, do not want to change their habits and concepts, nor would they relinquish their positions of power. They would surely prefer to preserve the existing situation. Those in charge often use excuses to justify their conduct and decisions, as in the case of the males’ signatures.

Following this, Anita said that she would not have noticed these things had I not pointed them out. Flattered by her comment I continued to wax philosophical: “With self-awareness and a lot of attention, as well as familiarity with feminist studies, it becomes natural to observe these things, which it is very important

to transmit to the WGOs. You can use such events (like the signature affair) in your talks with them to illustrate your ideas.” This blunt preaching was not the end of my overbearing, patronizing manner. Lecturing Anita about how to enlighten “her” WGOs in regard to gender awareness, I again brought up my research on Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. I reiterated how officials prevented women from receiving vocational training, justifying their discriminatory practices by invoking the immigrants’ culture. I said: “They would claim that in Ethiopia the woman worked indoors taking care of children, although she worked outdoors, in the fields, as well.” I concluded my “professional” talk by asserting that in the coming seminars the women should be the ones to sign the consent form.

My patronizing attitude was also evident in my use of professional and feminist jargon. On one of our visits to the villages, the women firmly demanded that their teacher be a married woman, rather than the one preferred by the WGO. They also disagreed about the location of the intended class. Anita was displeased with the women’s objection. Yet, I expressed satisfaction at the women’s behavior, arguing that “it is encouraging that women are collaborating to pursue a common cause.” Another key phrase I often employed was “to build on local forces.” I used that expression, for example, when Anita and I met the American head of a literacy NGO on a joint visit to Kathmandu (in fact, both the NGO person and I used it). Such terms conferred an impression of possessing the essential professional background and knowledge expected of a foreign consultant who was sincerely concerned with empowering the poor, weak, disadvantaged, and discriminated against Nepali people. Expressions like “developing women’s solidarity” and “forming women’s collective interest groups,” often used by me in daily encounters, also exemplified the role of jargon in establishing a convincing image of myself as an expert in gender issues. This terminology was always employed in a self-confident tone.

One such example was an informal meeting that I initiated at the bachelors’ house, the place where Leon, I and Tahal’s employees boarded at one time or another. Anita and the WGOs, who were invited to the party, were offered refreshments, and we were carrying on a friendly conversation. I began by saying: “I consider it as most important to have a solid, reliable group that meets regularly to discuss personal and general matters in relation to the women’s project. It is also essential to form a framework that can contribute to the self-enrichment of all involved.”

By taking center stage, and acting like a source of “authority” and expertise in relation to gender issues, I unintentionally pushed Anita aside and positioned her as inferior to me in this situation and in many others. Since I was playing the role of the expert, she became my trainee, or my junior assistant. That state of affairs was incompatible both with feminist and development values. Thus, for example, when the two of us came out of a meeting with some people from a health NGO that was held in Thapa’s room, I “advised” Anita to be more as-

sertive and to voice her opinions. Realizing that I had taken control of the conversation with the NGO people, I said to her: “It is most important that you speak out your ideas, and not let me shut you up. It is crucial not only so that people will listen to what you have to say and respect you, but also so that men will become used to listening to a Nepali professional woman like yourself.” Indeed, this advice exposed my hidden stereotype of Nepali professional women as people who lack self-confidence and need (an outsider’s) reassurance to speak up.

On another occasion I presented myself as a role model to convey to Anita appropriate professional conduct. In response to her doubts about the prospects of the women’s project being carried out, I said: “I would resign if the project turned out to be a fake.” Encouraging Anita to resign if she discovered that the women’s project was a sham exposed the pretentious attitude behind my expertise and professional integrity. It was easy for me to suggest that Anita resign as I was going back to a secure position at home. My conduct, then, illustrates Goffman’s claim that “as performers we are merchants of morality” (Goffman 1959: 251). I was, indeed, “concerned with maintaining the impression” that I was “living up to the many standards” according to which I assumed I would be judged. Moreover, I was “concerned not with the moral issue of realizing these standards, but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized” (ibid.: 251).

## **Complying with Expectations about Patronizing the Village Men**

The image of expertise I established was apparently so convincing that a short while before leaving Nepal to go back to Israel Leon came up with the idea that I should meet the male villagers and give them a talk. It was suggested that this initiative take place at one of the final ceremonial events, at which the management of the wells was transferred to the local farmers. During one of our regular communal breakfasts at the bachelors’ house, Leon said: “It is very important that you meet with the men, who are the other side of the equation. So far you have only met with women. You can talk to them and explain the importance of women’s advancement.” I replied that I liked the idea but that it was rather unlikely that Thapa would favor it.

However, Leon did not give up and later on he put the idea to Gupta. Gupta was anything but thrilled with the proposal, and hesitantly explained that these meetings were very messy and noisy, and that the men do not care to hear about women’s issues. He added that on these occasions only practical matters concerning the transfer of the wells were discussed. I knew from Leon’s stories that a recurring issue at these events was the complaint made by the villagers about the need for them to pay for the electricity for operating the wells once the running of the wells was transferred to them. These reservations did not convince Leon and he went into detail, describing to Gupta the important things I could tell the men. I flattered him and said that he sounded as though he was



very familiar with feminist thinking. Gupta gradually changed his mind and suggested that we ask Thapa. Eventually, Leon informed me that Thapa had agreed that I could speak to the men at the ceremony, which was scheduled to take place that same day. Leon reported to me: “I said to Thapa, ‘There are two options: One is that Esther will attend the meeting, sit there quietly and watch it. The other option is that she will talk to the men.’ Thapa replied: ‘Why not? Let her talk.’”

At the gathering, Leon sat at the speakers’ table, in front of an audience of some forty men. He was protective and patronizing toward me. While Gupta was introducing me, Leon asked him whether I should stand up or sit down. Gupta responded that I could sit down and he would translate what I said to the men in the room. Leon told me to speak to the men. My talk was patronizing and pretentious. I told them about the gender activities project and expanded on its far-reaching potential in terms of economic and social change. I highlighted the significant advantages that their villages would enjoy as a result of women’s empowerment. I mentioned the Scandinavian model of gender equality as an example of the embedded connection between women’s equality and social justice in wider society. At the end of my speech I added that they, as leaders who are responsible for the welfare of their communities, could enhance women’s participation in leadership.

Using the Scandinavian example, challenging the men as leaders regarding their attitude toward their female counterparts, and emphasizing the values of gender equality were all a way of displaying my expertise. My lecture revealed my ethnocentric view of my audience as less advanced, less informed, and even backward in terms of their understanding of the meaning of social change and gender issues. A passage in my notebook demonstrates this point: “At the end of the meeting I added the most difficult thing,” meaning my appeal to the men to share the leadership and management of the wells with the women. Thus, my assumption was that the idea of sharing leadership with the women would be problematic and threatening for the men, although my information about them was based mainly on the irrigation project officials’ stereotypical descriptions.

Leon’s efforts to have me lecture the village men could be understood as stemming from his appreciation of my expertise, and his sincere desire in wanting to raise the men’s gender awareness. But it could also be explained as serving his own and Tahal’s interests. Tahal was interested in employing foreign consultants as a means of creating profit for the company (a point I will return to at a later stage). Displaying my professional mastery of the subject and my demonstrated skills in communicating with the villagers (even with the men) could later serve to convince Thapa and the other Nepali heads of the irrigation project to hire my services (through Tahal) again. This argument also explains Leon’s desire to take center stage in the events that signified the termination of the irrigation project. Tahal’s essential part in the irrigation project had to be stressed constantly to the local project leaders.

## Patronizing Male Officials

Patronizing the male officials was an inseparable part of my interactions with them. Even on my last day at the irrigation project offices, when a second farewell party was organized for me, I revealed this attitude. Leon, Gupta, Pandit, Anita, and I were present in Acharya's room, talking about the informal farewell party. I used this opportunity to talk again about starting the literacy classes and said, in a somewhat dramatic tone: "You are the ones in charge and have the authority and the power to do things. It is easy for all of us to be content with what duty requires of us, but we can do meaningful things when we possess authority."

On that occasion I also belittled Anita, although inadvertently. As we were discussing the future of the women's project, Acharya suggested that as there was not enough money for carrying out the whole project it would be necessary to revise the budget and implement it only partially. Anita whispered to me, "every woman will enjoy, in fact, only a very small amount of money." I announced that Anita had something to say. Adding, "there is no chance that a woman will be able to speak out to a male crowd of people," I started to repeat what Anita had told me discreetly. At this point Leon interrupted me, saying that I should not speak for Anita but rather let her speak for herself. While I was presenting Anita and women at large as weak and vulnerable, Leon reprimanded me, exposing my own arrogant behavior. He responded to Acharya's statement about the necessary cuts in the budget by remarking that the gender activities project was too important to be scaled down. I reacted by saying that I was proud of Leon "for insisting on the full implementation of the women's program, even more than myself." Thus I presented the women's program as mine, and myself as being in charge of it, while treating Leon as a naive person who could be easily placated. The people I perceived as not appreciating the women program's importance were reprimanded (Acharya, for instance), while those who appeared to comprehend the women program's value (like Leon) earned my approval.

Using compliments and preaching to the male officials present produced a pattern of interaction in which I assumed the role of an authoritative educator who seeks to instruct the misbehaving trainees. This attitude entailed, as the above encounter illustrates, the infantilization of the other participants.

Similar dynamics recurred on other occasions, such as the more formal farewell party that was organized for me by the heads of the irrigation project before I left. The party took place on the rooftop of the office complex, in the open air, where people sat in a wide circle. Refreshments were served, including cold drinks, fruit, and samosas. Some forty people attended this event, among which were most of the WGOs, some of the AOs, Raju (Leon's secretary), Anita, Thapa, Gupta, Acharya, Pandit, and myself. Leon called me to join Thapa, the senior officials and himself at the front and to give a short speech. He introduced me, saying that I had come to Nepal with the purpose of empowering

women. I began with a short description of the women's program. Referring to Leon's introduction, I said: "Leon told you that I came to empower women but, as a matter of fact, I was empowered by the women I met in the villages."

In my short talk I used two examples, the first of which concerned one of the participants in the women teachers' seminar. This woman, who used to arrive at the seminar with her baby, came from a distant village but hardly missed a day of the whole seminar. I said: "If she could come despite the tough conditions, while having to leave her children behind to carry out the routine tasks at her home, and yet managed to arrive regularly at the seminar with her baby, it means that women can overcome many hardships on their way to improving their situation and acquiring education and professional training." My second example referred to an incident that took place at the ceremony that marked the conclusion of the teachers' seminar. All the heads of the irrigation project attended the event and a few local representatives of the Ministry of Education were also invited. The panel of speakers consisted of Thapa, Gupta, Leon, and the ministry official. Following an offensive remark made by one of the speakers toward a seminar participant, another seminar participant had stood up and supported the offended woman. Elaborating on that episode I said: "That woman's courage offers us a very important lesson: that only when women support each other and struggle together will we be able to change the situation and promote gender equality."

I then complimented the WGOs for "showing a profound devotion" and being "real feminists." I concluded my talk with praise for Thapa, saying that he was "a strong man" and that "many of the (irrigation) project employees think highly of you, and therefore much depends on you regarding the implementation of the women's project." Thus, my self-presentation as an expert on gender issues and women's empowerment, offering "empowering" evaluations about other women's devotion to feminism and judgmental statements regarding men's behavior towards women, served to legitimize and establish my professionalism.

## **Veiled Vulnerability**

Nevertheless, behind the authoritative disguise, my vulnerability was exposed at both the farewell parties put on for me. My performance as a foreign expert was not very convincing. It was made clear to me, implicitly and explicitly, that I did not belong there and that my expertise and feminist agenda were not welcome. In short, I was given to understand that as soon as I was gone my ideas would be gone with me. At the formal farewell party held for me the situation was especially embarrassing, at times even humiliating. Such was the case when Thapa asked to speak right after Anita finished her talk. He said that I had referred to discrimination against women, but then countered: "You don't know that at home the women can control the men." He continued his criticism, suggesting that I was not familiar with Nepali culture, which differs from Israeli culture. He then used the seminar incident, which I had mentioned in

my talk (concerning the woman who defended her offended friend), to illustrate his point. “You see”, he said “you thought that the woman was offended but Nepali people do not get offended that easily.” Thapa’s reservations in relation to my work and views became even more explicit following Leon’s comment. When Thapa complimented my work, Leon used the opportunity to suggest that the irrigation project would bring me back to Nepal. Thapa instantly replied, smiling, “I am not sure about that.”

The language also played a role in unmasking my vulnerability, as an outsider who could not speak or understand Nepali. Before addressing people, I asked for someone to translate into Nepali what I was saying. My request was refused and it was explained that the participants understood English. This was not true, as only a few of those who were attending the event spoke some English. I went on speaking, knowing that most of the people did not understand what I said. Anita spoke right after me. She spoke in Nepali, so I could not understand what she said, although she briefly told me later what she had said. Thapa, however, spoke in English. It appeared that he was directing his comments at me (and at Leon too), and probably did not care that the lower-ranked employees could not understand what he was saying. The message came out loud and clear: I was not one of them, I had presented myself as an expert but I knew nothing about Nepali culture and mentality. As most of my arguments referred to the gender context, and repeatedly offered comparisons between Nepal, Israel, and the Scandinavian countries, his criticism trivialized my proclaimed expertise as pretentious.

The farewell party, which was meant to show respect and gratitude for my work, became, inadvertently, a humiliating event for me. Reflecting on this clarified for me various incidents that had taken place before the party. Bargaining over refreshments, the timing of the party, and the number of participants to be invited—this was not hidden from me, and it indirectly conveyed the same message: the heads of the irrigation project did not sincerely regret my departure. I was asked to participate in ongoing discussions over details of organizing the party. One morning Leon handed me the printed invitations for my (“formal”) farewell party and told me to distribute them among the WGOs. He also informed me that he had agreed with Thapa that some ten people would be invited to the party, and that refreshments would include two samosas per participant, cold drinks, and fruit. At first I thought that Leon was handing me my own invitation. However, when he asked that Anita and I get the WGOs to sign receipts acknowledging their invitations (to make sure they would attend the party), I realized my mistake.

On yet another occasion I was made to feel uncomfortable when Leon and Thapa were discussing a suitable time for the party while I was present. Thapa suggested that the party should be in the early afternoon, to enable the WGOs to get back to their homes before dark. I then went to Pandit’s room to give him the invitations for the WGOs. He was surprised and said he knew nothing about the party.

I went up to Leon and told him of Pandit's reaction. Leon claimed that Pandit had attended the meeting with Thapa when they talked about the party. I then went to Thapa and told him that Pandit did not know about the party, that Leon had asked me to invite the WGOs, and that I felt embarrassed about the whole affair. Thapa smiled and explained calmly that the invitation (as well as the party) was initiated by Leon and that he (Thapa) had personally invited the irrigation project's people already. I said that I would go back to Pandit and ask him to invite the irrigation project's staff. Thapa suggested: "Perhaps Anita will notify the people." My total vulnerability was exposed when I blurted out: "You can thank God for getting rid of me." He reacted politely: "Oh no, we will be glad if you stay in Nepal."

### **Reluctant Patron, Vulnerable Foreigner**

Apparently my presence and conduct evoked covert and overt reservations. I seemed to provoke antagonism, especially among the higher-ranked officials. However, as much as my behavior may be described as ethnocentric and pre-tentious, I do not suggest that I was more arrogant, patronizing, and ethnocentric than most people are or may become under similar circumstances, or even in daily encounters. I suggest, rather, that the role I took on and the situation itself had a dramatic and inevitable impact on my behavior. Once I accepted the position of consultant in the women's project, I was obliged to play the expert role that was indirectly imposed on and expected of me. The point here is that my behavior should be understood in general and structural terms, rather than in personal ones. Moreover, I have tried to demonstrate that my confident authoritative self-presentation was in reality fragile and misleading. It became apparent that I did not really have any substantial power or influence. Rather, I was a transient visitor who depended on permanent local officials for recognition, acceptance, and respect.

Although Thapa expressed subtle hostility toward me, he was never offensive outright. I found out soon after my arrival in Nepal that he objected to my being hired by the irrigation project, and that prior to my arrival he had expressed his reservations explicitly to the heads of Tahal in Israel. His objection (about which, as I mentioned above, I did not know) delayed my visit for some time. Leon claimed that Thapa had objected to having any foreign gender consultants on the irrigation project.

Thapa's reluctance toward hiring gender consultants became clearer when Leon came out of Thapa's room one morning, looking very agitated. He told me angrily that Thapa had demanded that he make instant financial arrangements (through Tahal's consultants' budget) that would enable the urgent recruitment of a specific marketing expert to join the irrigation project. Leon said:

He wants me to provide him, here and now, with the consultant's CV, and employ him on the spot. But later on the matter will be set aside for a year, just as it happened with the women's program. It took him such a long time

to approve the hiring of Tovi Fenster [my predecessor], and then he would not accept anyone but her coming again. So I told him that she had broken her leg, and that she could not come because Thahal did not want her to come again as she had demanded she stay in a hotel and it was not good enough for her to reside in the bachelors' house. He [Thapa] said then that he did not approve of your CV, as a consultant for development projects. Do you think that this was the real reason? That was an excuse to delay the implementation. And do you think that he needed Tovi? But as the World Bank was pressing him to make progress with the women's program and he had no choice, he agreed to have Tovi again. But when Tovi could not come he conveniently used the excuse that your CV was not appropriate.

Thapa's implicit and explicit reservations toward me can be explained, at least partially, by his generally negative attitude to foreign consultants. They were probably perceived as parasites, who profited professionally and economically from development budgets at the expense of local, low-paid officials. Yet, Thapa's unequivocal demand that Leon arrange the immediate hiring of a marketing consultant rules out this interpretation as a sole explanation. Thapa's resentment can be better understood in relation to my explicit feminist position, which questioned his control—as a dominant male in Nepal, of the irrigation project, and at home as well. The underlying theme of the social exchange between the two of us, as well as between other heads of the irrigation project and myself, related to gender inequality and the need to change it. Therefore, I must have presented some sort of threat to men like Thapa who held high positions, were the superiors of women in the work place, and provided for, and thus economically dominated, their wives at home.

My overt criticism of male domination and the exclusion of women probably provoked resistance and defensive postures amongst the irrigation project managers. I would argue that the reason for objecting to my position and my presence was related mainly to my stubborn insistence on implementing the women's program and starting the literacy classes. This was not only a nuisance for the heads of the irrigation project. Rather, it exposed their resentment at the enforced obligation to transfer some of the World Bank's loan to the women's program, which they perceived as irrelevant to the irrigation project. The women's program was manipulated to the point whereby it was established as irrelevant to the "real" project, and this was done by demonstrating its unsuitability in terms of Nepali culture and its impracticability in terms of its time frame. Consequently, the \$500,000 budget allocated for the implementation of the women's program turned out to be "free money," unallocated from the point of view of the irrigation project's officials. Therefore, this money could easily be perceived and treated as available to them for their own purposes.

In the next chapter I shall focus on Leon's patronizing behavior and try to illustrate the impact that domineering social settings have on personal conduct.

## Notes

1. Weber perceives the extent of bureaucratic power over the individual as something that “reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine” (Weber 1978: lix).
2. In his anthropological study of a Pakistani village, Lyon proposes three definitional points about patron–client relations: they are systematically personal and dyadic; patron–client roles are voluntary and reciprocal; and the embedded friendship in these relationships is “instrumental” rather than “emotional” (Lyon 2004: 262).
3. Nöbauer follows the definition of “paternalism” in the *Metzler Philosophie Lexikon*: “[a] specific claim to legitimize economic and political domination, which is constructed in analogy to the position of the family patriarch and which stresses, in addition to the punitive power of the father of the house, of an enterprise or of a country, his social and ‘welfare’ duties. Paternalism always refers to both these aspects of the deployment of domination and production of obedience” (Metzler 1996: 382).
4. The Tahal Group is an international engineering concern. Founded in 1952, Tahal is involved in the planning, development, and management of water resources in Israel, and has carried out projects in over fifty countries on five continents.
5. Source: <http://www.undp.org.np/gender/projects/mgep/index.php?ProgramID=32> Retrieved 17 September 2010.
6. See note 1 in the Preface.
7. The Maoist guerrilla insurgency was launched in February 1996 by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist.
8. The category “paraprofessional” emerged in the US in the 1960s as a strategy to reduce social tensions by co-optation of indigenous/non-professional workers by social services. This practice was based on the concept of “new careers for the poor,” developed by Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman, who called for transforming “receivers of help (such as welfare recipients) into dispensers of help; to structure the situation so that receivers of help will be placed in roles requiring the giving of assistance” (Pearl and Riessman 1965: 88–89; see also Riessman 1968). Edward Brawley and Ruben Schindler, meanwhile, define “paraprofessional social welfare personnel” as “those persons who are engaged in the provision of social welfare services to individuals, families and communities, but who do not have professional social work education” (Brawley and Schindler 1986: 165). In another publication, they use the term “paraprofessional” in reference to a broad range of paid front-line social-welfare and social-development personnel who have received limited or no training for their jobs (Schindler and Brawley 1987).
9. My own experience in the paraprofessional field stems from founding the Israeli Association for the Development of Paraprofessional Manpower in Social Welfare Services (ASI) in 1979, initiated and funded by the Ministry of Labor and Welfare and JDC Israel, which I headed until 1982.
10. The concept and role of paraprofessional workers was adopted by the Israeli welfare services in the mid 1970s from the US. When immigrants from Ethiopia arrived in Israel in the 1980s and 1990s, they were sent to absorption centers run by the Jewish Agency. The *Somchot* were recruited to instruct and assist the newcomers in their integration into local society. The role of the *Somchot* was conceived of as a female occupation, based on homemaking and childcare (Etgar 1977; Jewish Agency 1984; Neipris 1984). In practice they transmitted to the immigrant women the social values that prevailed in the larger society and imposed social control through the embodiment of female identity (Hertzog 2001).
11. In 1983 I prepared a course for paraprofessional workers who instructed female immigrants from Ethiopia in absorption centers, run by the Jewish Agency.
12. Sally Andrade and Alvin Burstein (1973), who describe the introduction of indigenous non-professionals in mental health services in Texas, elaborate on the rationale for such usage, arguing that non-white, non-middle-class clients, frequently a majority in community clinics, are likely to relate more readily to helpers of similar socioeconomic or cultural background. Maruna and LeBel propose employing paraprofessionals to work with ex-convicts to combat

- their social exclusion and stigmatization. They suggest that this paradigm “calls for opportunities for ex-convicts to make amends, demonstrate their value and potential, and make positive contributions to their communities” (Maruna and LeBel 2003: 97).
13. Erving Goffman demonstrates this phenomenon through the example of American medical organizations’ dilemma of administering anaesthesia by nurses. This takes place “behind the front,” which involves “ceremonial subordination to doctors and a relatively low rate of pay” (Goffman 1959: 28).
  14. The role of transportation and other advantages in creating distance between local (rural) people and visitors has been indicated by Robert Chambers (1983). Visitors are of divergent affiliations and backgrounds, including government officials, specialists, academic researchers, staff of voluntary agencies, journalists, diplomats, politicians, consultants, and so on. In Chambers’s words, visitors are “encapsulated first in a limousine, Landrover, Jeep or car and later in a moving entourage of officials and local notables” (ibid.: 12).
  15. Thus, one basket would cost between approximately \$1.7 and approximately \$8.6 (as \$1 dollar’s value was approximately 58 rupees).
  16. That is approximately \$1.7 (see previous note).
  17. Robert Chambers contends that “whatever their private feelings, (indifferent, suspicious, amused, anxious, irritated, or enthusiastic), the rural people put on their best face and receive the visitor well” (Chambers 1983: 30).
  18. My own study points to the use of “uncleanliness” and “disease” in constructing images of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s, and to the representation of them as weak and needing guidance (Hertzog 2010b). The connotation of primitivism, manipulated by politicians and officials, is also evidenced in Shachak’s study on the inhabitants of a development town in Israel, inhabited by immigrants from North Africa, who settled there in the 1950s (Shachak 1985). Mosse suggests that in the Bhil society alcohol was connected “to ill-health, debt, social conflict and, most seriously for women, with domestic violence,” and that alcohol has been “a core symbol of Bhil underdevelopment” (Mosse 2005: 216–17).
  19. Goffman suggests that within the walls of social establishments there are teams of performers “who cooperate to present to an audience a given definition of the situation.” Establishments are divided, so he argues, between back and front stage. The front stage is “controlled in order to prevent ... [the] outsider from coming into a performance that is not addressed to them” (Goffman 1959: 238).
  20. My departure was scheduled for 24 September. Therefore, my attendance at the start of the literacy classes would necessitate them starting before the 24 September and ending the seminar by 22 September.
  21. This argument is illustrated in my work on the bureaucratic treatment of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel (Hertzog 2001), where I describe how officials employ cultural explanations to justify their discriminatory practices toward women with regard to vocational training and employment prospects.