

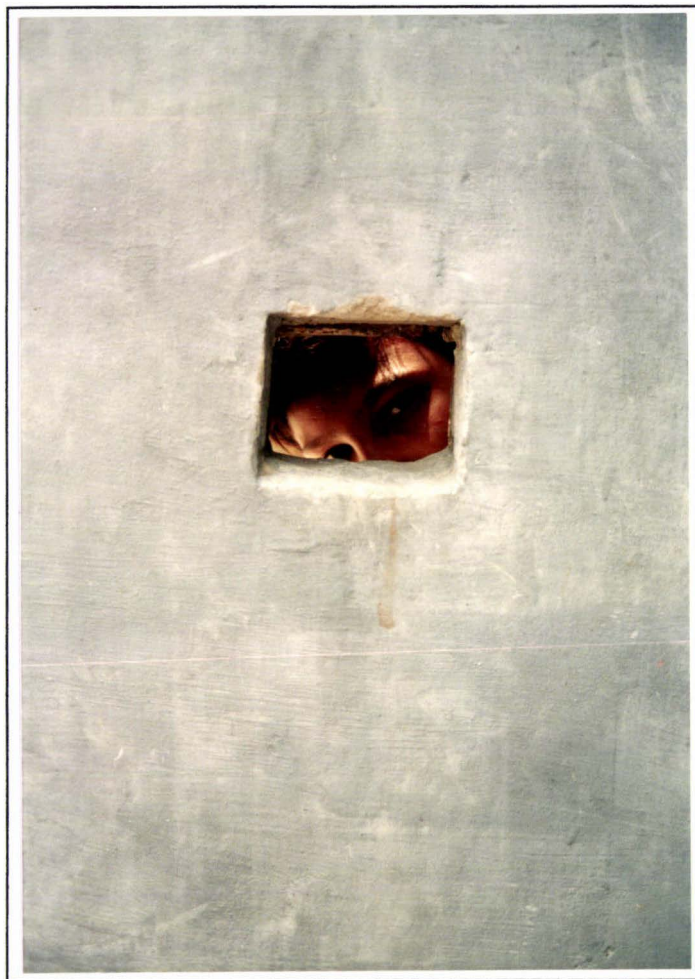
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**“Would you Like to Listen
or Not?” :**

**A Dissertation
Which Explores the Relationship
Between Research Participants and
Anthropologists in Karimpur**

A dissertation presented
in partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
PhD
in Social Anthropology
at Massey University

**Amanda Jane Rudge
1997**



0.1 What do research participants think about anthropologists and the work they do?



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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to state the research carried out for the Ph.D. thesis entitled "Would you like to listen or not?" : A Dissertation which explores the relationship between research participants and anthropologists in Karimpur, was done by A.J. Rudge in the Social Anthropology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. The thesis material has not been used for any other degree.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to state the research carried out for my Ph.D. thesis entitled "Would you like to listen or not?" : A Dissertation which explores the relationship between research participants and anthropologists in Karimpur. in the Social Anthropology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand is all my own work.

This is also to certify that the thesis material has not been used for any other degree.

Mandy Rudger

Date: 20 DEC. 96

Abstract

This dissertation explores the relationship between anthropologists and people who live in Karimpur, a north Indian village situated on the Ganges plain, 120 kilometres east of Agra. *Karimpur* is an anthropological pseudonym for “one of the most studied communities in South Asia” (Wadley 1994:xviii) which has been researched by anthropologists for over seventy years. As a result of this history, the village is currently the subject of four PhD dissertations, one MA thesis, six monographs and over fifty articles and conference papers. This dissertation concludes that an experience of living in such a well researched community has had an effect on the way people relate to the anthropologists who work in Karimpur. While the villagers referred to these researchers as fictive kin, a majority didn’t treat them as family but as respected guests. People positioned anthropologists in a fictive *jati*, or caste, of their own, and had an expectation that they will ‘help’ them by giving them clothing, money, and medicine in return for the information they gave them. However, few of the people spoken to were aware that the anthropologists who conduct research in their community also write about them. Future research must therefore take account of the villagers’ need to read what has been written about them, but it must also address their desire to comment on that work. It is suggested that anthropologists engage in a dialogue with the villagers about what research currently does and what it might do in the future, and that people in Karimpur work with these anthropologists to devise a research policy which addresses their needs for representation.



Adapted from *The Location of Karimpur in Mainpuri District and India* (Wadley 1994:9).

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to anthropological research participants everywhere. Without their generosity, their profound hospitality and a willingness to share their lives, the discipline of anthropology would not exist.

Acknowledgements

While this dissertation has my name on its cover, it disguises the three year process in which I and many others have been involved. It is a testament to the contribution of many people, and I wish to begin by acknowledging the villagers of Karimpur. I would like to thank them for giving so generously of their time and sharing their lives and experiences with yet another anthropologist. I hope that I have listened well and conveyed their experiences in the spirit they were shared.

More specifically, I would like to thank my two research assistants Nanhe Khan and Umesh Pandey. My debt to them can never be fully repaid. Firstly, I would like to thank Umesh for writing to the American Anthropological Association and asking if I would like to listen, as well as for all his work in Karimpur and Mainpuri. Secondly, I would like to recognise the very great contribution of Nanhe Khan, my research assistant and 'brother' who worked so hard with me on that second trip. Nanhe is a man of extraordinary skills and a special friend, and without his work and insight this dissertation would have never been completed. May his God recognise his efforts.

I would like to thank Professor Susan Wadley for putting up with a novice and rather ignorant anthropologist in Karimpur, as well as for her gracious hospitality. I know that being 'fieldworked upon' is challenging, but I thank her for her support. Although she was not in the village when I worked there the second time, I often felt her presence in the words of others and in her writings about the village which have helped me to understand more about the life of the people I worked with. Sunil Khanna also shared my first visit to Karimpur, and I would like to thank him for his friendship, humour, support and advice. I would also like to recognise the work of my patron Anil Misra, who was without doubt the very best patron any anthropologist could wish for, as well as a very special friend.

I also want to acknowledge the very significant contribution of my colleague and supervisor, Dr. Jeff Sluka, whose teachings, enthusiasm, advice, support, encouragement, and superb proof reading skills kept me moving steadily towards the goal of completion. I respect him immensely for allowing me to explore my own directions, while at the same time providing me with boundless encouragement and support. I know just how fortunate I was to have had such a skilled and able supervisor. It was Jeff's knowledge and willingness to share his experiences that was fundamental to my becoming an anthropologist, and for that I will always be grateful.

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who has not only been a fount of knowledge, but has the very extraordinary skill of being able to ask just the right questions at the right time, many of which have become pivotal points in the progress of this work. Not only did he ask the right questions, but he provided encouragement and support at times when pursuing this project seemed like a futile and professionally risky pursuit.

Family and friends have a huge and important role to play in the construction of any work. They, perhaps more than any other, have lived with the researcher and her thesis in all its phases. My partner Clif and my son Tom shared the experience of India with me, and a reflection of the depth of their support was that I often felt we were conducting a team approach to data collection. Clif offered me a male perspective on events, while my son gave me a child's perspective, both of which added profoundly to the way I perceived things. Tom also taught me a lot about how to behave as an anthropologist in India, because, unlike his Mother, he had less cultural baggage to shed. Although my daughter Phoebe didn't come to India with us, she also deserves special mention. As the returning traveller said to those who congratulated her on having made the journey: "Well done the staying at home" (Ochs in Sampson 1993:68). I would like to thank my partner Clif for listening to me practice my arguments and reading and commenting on all stages of my thesis. This was no mean feat, but then he is no ordinary man. I also wish to express my gratitude and love for the new members in my family, my much loved parosi (neighbours) in Bate Vale Gale, Mainpuri. They will always have a special place in my heart, and were without doubt the very best neighbours anyone could wish for. I thank all of my family for being with me in that experience.

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