



# FAR OUT



*The Newsletter of Folk Arts Rajasthan, Fall 2006*

*Dear Friends,*

This summer marked my first visit to India during hot season. Our thermometers capped at 120 degrees and the bottled water was the temperature of tea. Yet despite the blistering heat and sand storms, we continued to expand on our established projects and develop a few new ones.

With heart and hope, Karen Lukas, Executive Director

🌀 **Collaborations:** Brown University student Caitie Whelan rejoined us in India for two months on a fellowship conducting qualitative research and recording traditional music for her senior thesis project. Caitie overlapped with Daniela Franchi, an independent filmmaker, who spent seven weeks documenting the daily life of the Merasi community. Daniela's warmth and sensitivity were a wonderful addition and we look forward to reviewing her edited material. Continued and generous support from Stephen and Helene Huyler enabled us to empower all facets of FAR/LKSS' projects.

🌀 **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Hearts with Hope Tour:** Following the first tour, troupe members Sarwar, Rasul, and Anwar Khan and Pinkudi Nath move through the community with enhanced confidence and commitment to the betterment of their people. These four original troupe members will be joined for the next tour by Chhuge Khan, a multi-talented, multi-instrumented musician, and Khutla Khan, the fastest khartal player in the Thar Desert. The six members recorded CD material highlighting a variety of different instruments. We will keep you informed as plans develop. A significant achievement following the tour was the first ever Samaalan (community decision making meeting) that Sarwar organized and hosted. Over 100 Merasi representatives gathered to vote on cultural changes they could collectively incorporate into their lives.

🌀 **Education: A Two-Fold Initiative**

*Women & Children's Daily Literacy Tutorials:* Two years into this project, the 16 –20 core participants can read and write in Hindi, do simple math problems, and are mastering basic English. Some participants have applied their skills to our fair-trade project.

*Scholarship Program:* Annual evaluation of our 9 scholarship students highlighted the educational achievements of our kids. The success of our endeavors emphasizes the communal commitment to education as a means of cultural improvement.

🌀 **Luigi4Luigi: Women's Fair Trade Project:** A dedicated group of 17 women continue to produce our existing products, while also working on exciting new samples. Many participants have improved their family's health and economic stability, and three children now go to school on their mother's wages. During tourist season, we will be operating a fair-trade shop located on the main road to the Sam Dunes National Park. Caitie and I, along with our Rajasthani family, prepared and painted the small, colorful room. Our fair trade signs have already attracted curious tourists!

🌀 **Guide License:** LKSS manager Sarwar Khan continues his three-year struggle to obtain a guide license. Without a license, Sarwar cannot travel freely with any international visitors, including FAR director Karen Lukas. On August 10<sup>th</sup>, Sarwar, Karen, Caitie, and Daniela met with Rajasthani Education Minister Ghanshyam Tiwari and informed him of Sarwar's case. Min. Tiwari pledged to personally assist us as we try to resolve this crippling problem. For those of you who are planning to see us in Jaisalmer, we anticipate a resolution within the coming months and encourage your visit and support!

**FOLK ARTS RAJASTHAN**

314 East 84<sup>th</sup> St. #11, New York NY 10028 Tel/Fax: 212-628-7210

[www.folkartsrajasthan.org](http://www.folkartsrajasthan.org)

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© **Merasi Children's Book Project:** Karen Lukas collaborated with artist Indra Banu on a book project made possible by Barbara Goodbody's generous support. Indra produced marvelous imagery for the first of a series of creative children's teaching manuals.

## **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

In August, the Thar Desert was devastated by days with unprecedented torrential rainfall. Subsequently, hundreds of already impoverished musician families have been left without homes, livestock, and instruments. Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan, with matching support from FAR, organized an immediate relief effort, distributing aid packages to over 300 families in 40 villages of Jaisalmer District. Without instruments, many of these musicians do not have their traditional form of livelihood. We, at FAR, are launching an **INSTRUMENT DRIVE** and need your support.

### **GIFTING LEVELS**

- 1.) **PERCUSSION:** Any amount under \$50 can help buy khartals (traditional percussion instrument), mutka (water pot), or conchia (finger cymbals) that families will share
- 2.) **RHYTHM:** \$50 or more buys a dhol (drum) and khartals that families will share
- 3.) **MELODY:** \$200 or more buys a dhol, khartals, and a harmonium or kamacha (endangered traditional stringed instrument) that families will share
- 4.) **THE FULL CONCERT:** \$500 or more buys a dhol, khartals, harmonium or kamacha, dholak (a smaller drum), a mouth harp, finger cymbals, a water pot, and wind instruments that families will share

All your contributions are tax-deductible. Please make your checks payable to 'Folk Arts Rajasthan' and mail to:

Folk Arts Rajasthan  
314 East 84<sup>th</sup> St. #11  
New York, NY 10028

Your contribution supports the preservation of a 37 generation-old musical legacy. Thank you for returning the gift of music to these deeply talented families!

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