



Folk Arts Rajasthan

September 2010 Newsletter

New York 2010: Summer of Positive Intentions

Despite summer heat, we have had a productive summer dedicated to Education and Preservation. One of the greatest strengths of the Folk Arts Rajasthan and Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan partnership is the determination of interns and volunteers to facilitate lasting positive change for the marginalized Merasi community.

Here at FAR, young people who are pursuing their educational goals and often hold part-time jobs, still commit valuable intentions and skills. Older volunteers holding full time jobs also carve out precious time to move our programs forward or commit time in the Desert Sands.



Photos by Karen Lukas

In 2009, intern Emily Abramson designed and launched five weeks of basic Merasi Health classes into the Merasi School curriculum. In 2010, she is readying a ten-week lesson plan for Merasi School.

Folk Arts Rajasthan
314 E. 84th St, Suite 11 New York, NY 10028
212-628-7210
info@folkartsrajasthan.org



Multi-tasking Intern Dayanita Ramesh studies art history in California and finds local and indigenous artistic tradition fascinating... especially when it comes from her home country. She says, "The Merasi's story really tugs at my heart strings. I admire their courage, despite their hardships, to endure and create such compelling works of visual art and music. I think the whole world needs to know who they are!"



Karen Lukas & the Intern Team

Dedicated social media proponents, Harbani Ahuja and Ken Yee, are minding our Facebook & Youtube presence.

Thank you Andrea, Ariti, Chutny, Dayanita, Deepti, Harbani, Niyati, Kai, Ken, Mark, Michael, Saad, plus the Adams, Alison, Dave, Gabby, John, Lilian, Susan, and MS program co-director Pamela Pelizzari.

The office is currently in need of at least one Mac laptop. If you have one gathering dust, please send it the FAR way!

www.folkartsrajasthan.org
www.merasischool.org
www.facebook.com/Folk-Arts-Rajasthan
www.youtube.com/folkartsrajasthan



Folk Arts Rajasthan

The Good Word: Rolling FARward

Photo by Karen Lukas



In August, the brand new rickshaw bus for Merasi School arrived at Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan in Jaisalmer! With your dedication and support, the Merasi have been able to realize another dream as new students join Merasi School.

Folk Arts Rajasthan is in the midst of planning for the Hearts With Hope 3 Tour in Fall 2011. FAR appreciates your recommendations for possible venues and audiences to reach with spectacular music and a compelling story. Two tours have brought the music to a wide variety of venues, from elementary to high schools and colleges, local trendy spots, and notable stages.

We are collecting ideas on how to make our third tour a rip-roaring success, celebrating an ancient, yet eternally hip experience for all.



Photo by Niils P. Schlebusch

Folk Arts Rajasthan
314 E. 84th St, Suite 11 New York, NY 10028
212-628-7210
info@folkartsrajasthan.org



On August 6, 2010, NPR World Vision Report aired a story by musicologist and reporter Adam Pogoff. In "Untouchable Music School," Adam takes listeners to Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. There, Merasi School teaches traditional songs that have been passed down for 38 generations.



Photo by Allison Brockhouse

Merasi Rights 2010: Come Rain or Shine

"...Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" -Mary Anne Radmacher

As the school year was ending, Sarwar Khan called FAR with scholarship student, Asha, standing beside him. They had 30 minutes to decide whether 15-year-old Asha, whose English surpasses many of her peers, would repeat the 8th class or stop going to private school. She would not be allowed to pass into the 9th class. Sarwar explained that after completing the 9th class, one could apply for a government job. Asha has been slammed hard against the glass ceiling of caste. She agreed to repeat the 8th class when school resumed to show her dedication to the fight for the Merasi right to education.

www.folkartsrajasthan.org
www.merasischool.org
www.facebook.com/Folk-Arts-Rajasthan
www.youtube.com/folkartsrajasthan

Folk Arts Rajasthan Merasi Rights 2010: Acid Rain

This summer Merasi School & Music Merasi students chose to attend classes throughout the hot season, when other schools were closed and temperatures rose daily to 115 degrees.

On July 18th, 2010 Sarwar Khan reported he had gone to the market for school supplies when he felt “liquid” on his back. When he got back to Merasi School, his clothing was burned, leaving him with “American grape size” blisters from acid.

In 1992, Sarwar Khan told me in our first conversation over chai, that he was committed to helping his community, traditionally known as Manganiyar (meaning beggar). “I don’t want to be treated worse than a dog my whole life,” he cried out in frustration.

In 2010, eighteen years since that first sip of tea, prejudice still dominates.

Photo by Kevin Yatarola



Photo by Karen Lukas



Folk Arts Rajasthan
314 E. 84th St, Suite 11 New York, NY 10028
212-628-7210
info@folkartsrajasthan.org

Sarwar suggests,
“They have worryness that I will make change.”

In 2008, FAR celebrated as Sarwar was honored with a Doctorate Degree at Maine College of Art for his work in cultural preservation

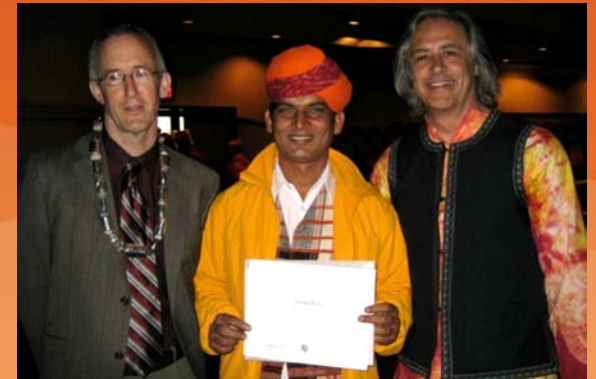


Photo by Kathleen Brown

Today, “Manganiyars” have chosen to call themselves Merasi, meaning musician. The women have had the courage to step forward and share personal stories with FAR volunteers. Children are proud to be Merasi School students and are becoming bi-literate and tri-lingual.

Thank you FAR Board, Advisors, Donors, and Supporters for making this change possible.

With your generosity, FAR and Lok Kala Sagar Sansthan will have the means to continue working for Merasi children’s education and the unique Merasi Cultural legacy.

Checks payable to Folk Arts Rajasthan, and donations on-line fuel our programs and aspirations. Without all of you, FAR and Merasi achievements are not possible.

Looking forward to a vibrant Fall,
Karen Lukas
Director Folk Arts Rajasthan

www.folkartsrajasthan.org
www.merasischool.org
www.facebook.com/Folk-Arts-Rajasthan
www.youtube.com/folkartsrajasthan