

Globalization and Local Politics:
Anthropological Study of Muslim Musician Community in Rajasthan

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This presentation describes part of a socio-cultural anthropological study exploring the transmission of culture or the enculturation and social resilience in a period of rapid culture change. The study specifically examines how global experience affects local tradition and social identity through a case of Muslim hereditary musicians known as Mirasi in Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan.

Several musical groups give performances in Europe under the name of “Gypsies of Rajasthan” today. The leaders and most core members come from the Mirasi community circulating continually between India and Europe. Although descendants of court musicians, they have been compelled to find a new patrons and clients in post-colonial India. One went to France assisted by a personal network and succeeded as a director-musician of the group named “Musafir Gypsies of Rajasthan” after economic liberalization in India in 1991. One new characteristics of the group is that it includes members of various castes such as Manganiyar, Langa, Karberiya, and Mirasi. Not a few Mirasi younger people became members of Musafir. Later, each became independent as a group leader.

As described in this presentation, the speaker examined how their global experience, especially in France, affects not only on their own local music tradition but also social relationships and communal politics in Jaipur, with special reference to 1) caste identity, 2) ritual practice, 3) marriage relationships, and 4) hierarchy consciousness and social norms underlying them. How do they employ the local social norms and deal with new global realities in the post-colonial world? That is a realm of the imagination in the lifeworld and an issue for future discussion.