

# Nandlal Fellowship Proposal



# Background and Experience

- Hails from a sari weaver family near Varanasi
- In 1994 he gave up his study of B.Sc and started teaching kids in the village
- Inspired the youth to teach in the schools and was able to start 10 such schools (2 day and 8 night) without any outside support
- He got his MA and BA degrees in Sociology in 1999 and 1997 from Purvanchal University, Jaunpur.
- In 1999 at the age of 22, he founded Lok Samiti – a people's organization. Lok Samiti has now spread to 25 villages
- Started the Kala Manch – a cultural team which went to different villages to raise awareness on social issues through the medium of street plays and songs
- In 2001 – he became the State Convener (from U.P.) of the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM)
- In 2003, he led the community struggle against the Coca-cola plant in Mehdiganj demanding the people's right to water

# Background information ...

- Formation of 30-35 self-help groups for women
- Initiated campaigns in 2-3 villages to raise awareness about the right to information, the right to work and the right to food

# Education initiative

- Started teaching kids from the neighborhood in 1994 (that is why he is called Nandlal Master)
- Most children in the area worked with their families in the local Benarasi sari industry. Started evening schools for the children so that they could continue working. Believes that the children are learning useful skills which could help them earn their livelihood
- 500 children are currently studying in the schools (Asha Samajik Vidyalaya). Many hundreds have passed out of these schools and many of them have joined government schools
- Working on getting formal recognition for the schools – may help in getting some facilities from the government
- Make the government schools accountable – for educational content and schemes like the mid-day meal
- “Children should be taught to be independent thinkers. Being educated is more important than being literate”

# School Photos





# Night School



# Lok Samiti

- Lok Samiti – a people's organization with no religious or political affiliations was founded in 1999. Any sustained change can only be brought about by people participation rather than a single person
- Helps organize people so that they can represent themselves. The organization is democratic in structure with the representatives answerable to the people
- The group focuses on the issues of the people and works to find their own solution by collaborating with other Lok Samiti or other groups in the area
- Lok Samiti has committees in 20 – 25 villages
- Encourages people to stand for elections to the Panchayat – Mukesh was elected as Pradhan in Nagipur and Urmila was elected as a Panchayat member in Benipur
- Increase awareness on various social issues through the Kala Manch

# Lok Samiti





# Lok Samiti – Kala Manch

- Kala Manch consists of 8 – 9 members who go from village to village raising awareness about social issues through the medium of street plays, songs, public meetings, etc
- Identify problems/issues in a particular village and then make plays addressing those problems
- Issues addressed include elections, corruption, women rights, implementation of government schemes like the right to work, right to food, right to information, mid-day meals in schools, etc
- Team has been invited to various places to perform like the Asha Hardoi center. After the Gujarat riots, the troupe went there for a week trying to spread the message of communal harmony. They took part in the Indo-Pak peace march from Delhi to Wagah. Visited Orissa after the storms and earthquakes there to try to alleviate some of the sufferings of the people using the medium of songs and plays

# Women Empowerment

- Women traditionally do not have much rights – whether it is the household or the community
- Organized the women into self-help groups to deal with issues common to them. Created about 35 such self-help groups so that they can be financially independent – this will enable them be equals in rights and responsibilities
- Started two stitching centers for girls
- The struggle to conserve water and the protest against the Coca-cola plant has been led by women groups

# Struggle for water

- Organized a movement against Coca Cola because the company is drawing large amounts of ground-water while the community is facing an acute shortage of water. The company is also guilty of encroaching on Panchayat land, evading stamp duty and dumping harmful sludge on fields
  - Started an indefinite dharna on March 23, 2006
- Organizes water stops – providing free drinking water at railway stations, market places, etc emphasizing that water is a basic human right and not something that should be bought and sold for profit
- Planning to mobilize people to start building lakes and rain-water harvesting structures to actively work on conserving water

# First day of Dharna





# Water Stop





# Fellowship Proposal

- The proposal is to provide Rs 10,000/month (~\$225/month)
- The money will be sent in two six monthly installments
- This fellowship does not dictate what work he should be doing, but rather supports him in his efforts while it gives us an opportunity to learn from him
- There will be a monthly conference call to get an update on his work and to give people a chance to ask questions