

TO A NETWORKER PAR EXCELLENCE

श्रद्धांजलि

SHRADDANJALI



ANIL K. SINGH
01 AUG 1957 - 13 JULY 2022



VANI
Celebrating 30 Years
VOICE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

A Family Man



Preface

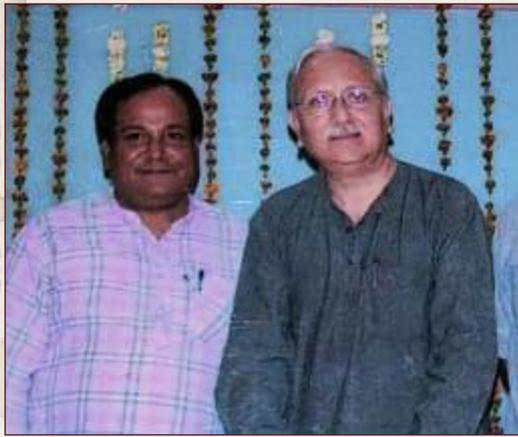
VANI is pleased to present a monograph of Sh. Anil Singh, as a homage to its founding Member Secretary. The contribution of Anil ji in the creation of VANI will never be forgotten. Before VANI, the voluntary sector of India did not have any platform to raise and articulate issues of civic space and make the sector vibrant. Not only Foreign Contribution Regulation Act but many regulatory changes were made by the government with absence of coordinate input from the voluntary sector. The final call came when the then planning commission expressed its desire to impose 'Code of Conduct' on the CSOs. The voluntary sector wanted to respond and register its response but there was no central body to amplify its voice.

Due to changing times the sector also faced many operational challenges which required new methods and models of governance. That was the beginning of idea called VANI and Anil ji was selected as the person to actualise this idea. I joined VANI after almost two decades after its inception, but not new to my personal relations with Anil ji. He used to visit PRIA regularly where I worked for almost two decades and we both are Alumni of the same university. Despite being quite junior to him, I realised that he was popular with almost every generation of people around him. He had a unique ability of building and nurturing relationships and explaining complex situation in common language.

This unique ability of his helped him in building the strong network of VANI across states, themes, and countries. The Members, Secretariat and Governing Board of VANI will always remember Shri Anil Singh and recognise his contribution in giving voice to the sector.

– Harsh Jaitli and VANI team

Passionate, Vocal, Determined Anil



I first met Anil when he walked into PRIA's Sainik Farm office along with his 'buddy', another Choudhury. Anil Singh was then working at CWDS (with late Venna Mazumdar di). In the course of the conversation, I informed him about the campaign against 'Code of Conduct' and the forthcoming convention in late September 1986. Anil volunteered to participate.

When a core group of voluntary sector folks decided to carry on with the networking essential to articulate a collective identity & voice in public domain, it was agreed to set up a nodal communicator. Late Smitu Kothari offered his one room space in Jorbagh area for this action

(since we had agreed to keep it independent from then core group); I remembered Anil, and asked if he would be willing to play this role, for some small sum of a few hundred rupees a month.

Over the next 2 years, this core group met in Udaipur, Mohuda (Ganjam), Bangalore & Calcutta. The decision to formalise the "voice of voluntary sector" as VANI (based on brilliant suggestion made by Ajay Mehta) was thus made at CINI. It was agreed that the core group will galvanise support for a small secretariat (including remuneration for Anil), as its legal status was yet not determined. Anil continued to play the role of a coordinator and communicator, readily and actively.

VANI's formal office began in Hauz Rani area of South Delhi in 1990. Anil began to get VANI's programmes moving, especially as new economic policy was announced by the government. The first convention of VANI was held in Ghaziabad and I became formally elected Chairperson. Those five years in 1990s (I stepped down as Chairperson after first term despite Anil's request not to) became foundational for developing a series of sector-wide initiatives. Anil began to play an active representational role internationally as well, and VANI's model became an example for other countries of the Global South.

The engagements with National and State Governments began by VANI in that period of early 1990s set the tone for greater access and participation of voluntary organisations in official committees of the governments, Planning Commission and other statutory bodies. A much healthier, open and dialogical partnership emerged, after the hostility of 1980s when Kudal Commission was let lose to 'hound' voluntary organisations. It is ironical, indeed, that I was 'brought in' as Chairperson of VANI again after a decade (in 2003) when Anil began the process of separation from VANI. He continued his passionate crusade through various national and international networks of Civil Society (as called nowadays). Anil continued to be passionate about realising justice and dignity for all in society. His emphasis on inclusion of the local and small actors in national platforms was value-driven. He was determined, till very end, to remain active and vocal about ways in which Indian society needs to be transformed.

We will miss Anil!

“The first convention of VANI was held in Ghaziabad and I became formally elected Chairperson. Anil began to get VANI's programmes moving, especially as new economic policy was announced by the government. Those five years in 1990s became foundational for developing a series of sector-wide initiatives. Anil began to play an active representational role internationally as well, and VANI's model became an example for other countries of the Global South.”

Dr Rajesh Tandon, Founding Chairperson, VANI

A Fond Remembrance

My first meeting with Anil bhai was in the late 90s. He met me with so much warmth and 'apnapan' that the meeting left me puzzled. I kept trying to figure out if we had met earlier as so much apnapan in the first meeting seemed extraordinary; but gradually I realised that was Anil bhai. A quintessential peoples' person, he gave warmth and affection with a completely open heart.



Another amazing aspect of Anil bhai was that this warmth and affection was the same for each and everyone he met. I did see him interacting with very influential and powerful people and at the same time with ordinary folks but he treated them equally. In the last two decades, he and I worked together at multiple levels including setting up an institution (which now is a leading think-tank), as a board member, building a large campaign on governance accountability and contributing together to global civil society campaigning against poverty.

He certainly embodied the idea of networking and played a very powerful role in the voluntary sector in giving it a sense of collective identity by building VANI.

“It is a personal loss as I have lost a friend. Collectively, we have lost an important voice and a champion of the sector.”

Amitabh Behar, Oxfam India

A Homage



Someone called on my mobile & amp; informed me that Anil Singh is no more, I was surprised and shocked.

I had a recent conversation with Anil ji few days ago, he told that only yesterday, Dutta Patil and Mazhar Hussain came to the house and he was healthy by that time.

We have been very close to each other since the inception of VANI. We jointly visited abroad several times. He played an important role in building the network of Voluntary Sector in this country. A pillar of a Civil Society has gone from our midst.

Our relationship was not only institutional but also personal. He had come to Madhupur with his family. He liked to come to Madhupur and visit our work area, especially among the tribals.

His political initiatives in Bihar are important and continuing. Whenever I stayed in VANI, was involved in meeting his family and the discussions continued late into the night.

“He was an executive member for a long time in ASW and played a very important role there. Finally, a strong pillar of the Voluntary Sector is no more with us.”

Arbind Kumar, Lok Jagriti Kendra

A Silent Worker of Voluntary Sector and a Great Networker

A Multi-faceted connector The Civil Society Sector has lost one of its senior leaders in the untimely death of Shri Anil Singh. Members in North India will particularly feel his loss. He was a great connector and was linked to a wide spectrum of Civil Society members from the community to the national and regional levels. His ability to connect and network contributed in the building of national forums like VANI and WNTA. He played a critical role in shaping these forums and building their strategies. He expanded the reach of these forums and many people still connect to these forums from his initiative.



Anil ji is also remembered for his 'continuous ear to the ground'. He constantly explored how communities on the ground can be supported and empowered. His work with migrant workers in promoting livelihood and building their resilience during the pandemic is commendable. His work extends to many districts in Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. His constant going back to the community was also evident in the last days when he was reaching out to communities in North Bihar after the pandemic. Addressing poverty and hunger through promoting agriculture and livelihoods was close to his heart. SANSAD (South Asia Network for Social and Agriculture Development) which he promoted and built continues to carry this work forward. He strived to build multi-stakeholder platforms bringing in communities with experts. SANSAD is among the few organisations that built its reach across South Asia including Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri-Lanka and Pakistan. On a personal note, he was well-informed and knowledgeable on many issues. He gave time to friends and colleagues, giving a supportive hand where and ever needed. The civil society sector has lost a friend and leader who will always be remembered. Anil Ji was one of the founders and leaders of the Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA). We gratefully remember his contribution to the forum and also the sector at large

“Anil ji is also remembered for his 'continuous ear to the ground'. He constantly explored how communities on the ground can be supported and empowered.”

Annie Namala, WNTA

Memories and More



The news about the passing away of Mr. Anil Singh was quite shocking for us as he was youngest among the three who started their professional life together at Centre for Women's Development Studies in 1980.

It's too early and too sudden and perhaps was avoidable as well.

We met during 1975 at JNU, contested election for JNUSU councilor against each other in 1977 and came out and took up job in 1980 in the same organization.

His humbleness, simplicity and persistence was remarkable throughout. Though our professional engagement with each other has drastically reduced since 1993, he always kept in touch and always took my satirical comments in stride.

The first decade JNU fraternity and the friends he has made in Development Sector will always feel his absence.

“His recent initiative of bringing together concerned citizens for brainstorming about development of his native state Bihar is perfect demonstration of his commitment and persistence.”

Anil Choudhary, PEACE

In our Loving Memories.....

I met Sri Anil Singh in 2004 at SRI Ranchi and it was an instant connection. We discussed on promotion of civil society network in Jharkhand and further he requested me to meet him whenever I visited Delhi. Since then, there was a long gap and again we started meeting after inception of WNTA. He put a great deal of effort to mobilise CSOs in the process of inception of WNTA. He was a very genuine person, who did not miss any opportunity to help the ones in need. I requested him to be part of LEADS journey and continue to contribute through his long accumulated experience which he graciously accepted and joined us as chairperson in 2011. He was very positive towards social work and always tried to work in a group to consolidate our energy to address major issues of communities. We always appreciated his creative and innovative suggestion throughout his association with us. The last physical meeting we had with him was in Varanasi from 14 th to 16 th April 2022. We had long discussion on various issues and he assured me to visit one of our project area having more than 70 acres of mango plants to enjoy the mango together and celebrate the success of the project. Little did we know, this would be our last meeting! Sri Anil Singh was a complacent person in physical term yet wanted to do many things for weaker sections and as part of his new initiative, he founded a network to raise issues concerning north Bihar for which he also invited me to join. We had a beautiful journey with meaningful experiences. I was always welcomed as a family member in his home. The trust and support he had in us at each step constantly helped us to grow further in our journey.



“ We will miss him eternally. Although he is not here with us, but his learning will continue to guide us. We pay tribute to him from core of our heart and pray for heavenly departed soul. May god bless his family! ”

A K Singh, LEADS

Boundless Enthusiasm and Infectious Smile



To remember Anil Bhai as someone in the past is too early and too unexpected. His old world endearing image of an ever smiling jhola wala remains a constant presence and his restless energy on being active on so many fronts will remain a lasting inspiration.

I got to know him rather late in my life, during my association with Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, of which he was a founder member. I was a

rookie newcomer to the network of Delhi activist circles and through my professional INGO tag.

He was among those who came across as easily approachable with his guileless smile and a welcoming elder brother countenance - without being patronising.

There were debates around country's priorities, social sector' as views on the same, it's own legitimacy and the challenges to give a structured response to all of these. Moreover, there was a huge challenge to build the WNTA network and deepen its roots within the Civil Society groups in India. Anil Bhai was a champion in the same with his huge connections across spectrum, and regions, with his own diversity of experiences. No wonder he remained associated with so many fronts too.

Even in his last years (one could definitely visualise this as being his planned last work), he remained associated with ventures ranging from agricultural issues to engaging and mobilising progressive forces in Bihar (being a Bihari himself)!

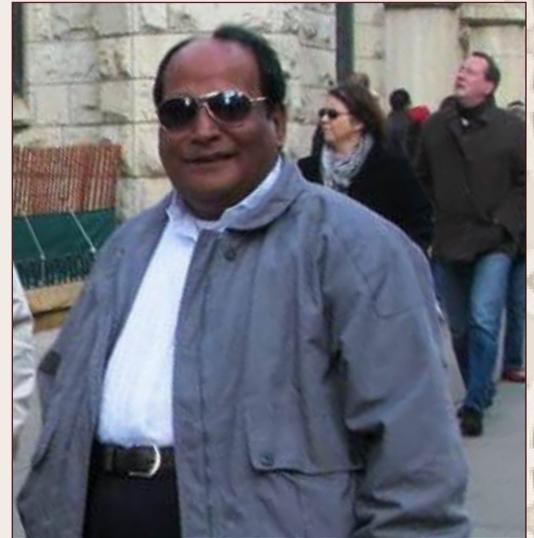
“That boundless enthusiasm to continuously engage with the changing world around and coming up with several ideas and continuing to experiment is what would be his lasting legacy. All with his welcoming, infectious smile!”

Avinash Kumar, Activist and Researcher

My Dad

From the day I was born to the date of your death and beyond, I heard only positive things about you from each and every person I met. I am deeply shocked and in pain from losing you. You breathed your last in my hands and the tears could not be stopped since 5:50 am on Aug 13, 2022 when I lost you. You started your journey from C.W.D.S in 1982, then VANI in 1988 followed by SANSAD in 2004. You felt deeply for each organisation that you worked with and gave your very best.

Your loss is irreparable - R.I.P DAD



“Your enthusiasm and commitment towards social sector was such that you treated every NGO like your own child and you took initiatives to do new things with each passing day.”

Atul Singh

My Friend - My Associate



I have a long association with my friend Anil Singh. He has always been ready with a smile to extend full support whenever there is a need. He is a friend of all times. He never minded an untimely call or a visit. I have never heard him saying that I am busy, call or visit any other time. He made other people very comfortable. His office and home are always open to all. Bhabi

ji also smilingly welcomes whenever I have visited. This incredible couple has their own distinctive personalities. However, at home they came across as one loving and welcoming unit.

On the centenary of the Champaran movement, Anil organized a 'padayatara' to learn from the power of testimonies of the farmers. As he knew my interest, he made it a point to call me to be a part of the event. Unfortunately, I could not join, which I regret. Anil always involved himself in diverse social movements. He always derived his inspiration from the grass-root struggles and movement whether he was a student, researcher, CEO of VANI or founder of SANSAD. I am privileged to mention that Anil is one of the founder members of UNNATI of which I have been the founder director. We will continue to fondly remember his association with UNNATI.

Anil has many ideological facets – he is a Marxist, Socialist and also a Liberal which made him accessible to all types of institutions, and he was always ready to support the smaller voluntary organisations and activists working in remote areas with vulnerable communities.

Anil will always be remembered by friends and colleagues!

“ He always derived his inspiration from the grass-root struggles and movements whether he was a student, researcher, CEO of VANI or founder of SANSAD.”

Binoy Acharya, Unnati



संस्मरण

स्मृतिशेष हम सबके प्रिय भाई अनिल सिंह जी के बारे में कोई संस्मरण बताना या लिखना बड़ा मुश्किल लग रहा है। क्योंकि उनके साथ पिछले 35 साल का स्नेह संबंध रहा है। देश के स्वैच्छिक जगत को उनका योगदान भूलाया नहीं जा सकता। मुझे याद आता है कि जब कभी भी स्वैच्छिक जगत का कोई मुद्दा इस देश में आया है तो अनिल सिंह जी ने उस मुद्दे पर “वाणी” की तरफ से अपना हस्तक्षेप जरूर किया है। वॉलेण्टरी एक्शन नेटवर्क इण्डिया (वाणी) के स्थापना से ही उनका संबंध रहा है, और उनके लगन व मेहनत का ही प्रतिफल है कि आज देश में ‘वाणी’ स्वैच्छिक संगठनों के संगठन के रूप में जाना जाता है। अपने मित्रों के प्रति, मित्रों के संस्थाओं के प्रति उनका योगदान और सहयोग हमेशा सक्रियता के साथ होता रहता था।

स्वैच्छिक जगत में आज उनके न रहने का अभाव देखा जा सकता है।

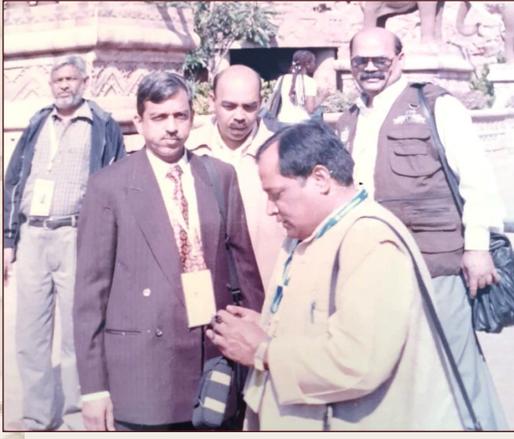
मैं ईश्वर से प्रार्थना करता हूँ कि उनकी आत्मा को शांति प्रदान करें, एवं उनके परिवार को इस दुःख को सहने की शक्ति व संबल प्रदान करें।

!! ओम शांति !!

भारत भूषण

पानी संस्थान, अयोध्या

Anil Singh- Lovely Friend



Actually, when I became active in VANI, Anil ji had given charge to his successor. But I heard a lot about his contribution in VANI. I participated in many events of VANI when he was the Secretary of VANI and found him most helpful in nature and taking care of the representatives from across the nation and providing guidance. In those days Anilji use to come up with many publications on behalf of VANI, which helped develop the perspective

of the grassroots organizations. On behalf of the sector, he used to visit the Ministries and the Secretariats in Delhi.

I got an opportunity to stay with him in South Africa and the experience was wonderful. We became very close friends after that. Whenever I used to be in Delhi, we use to meet in one or other program. Even apart from the official sessions, we used to meet in the evenings. His political understanding and the study of ongoing politics were really updated. I never found him to be selfish. He never kept himself away from the common person.

Anil Ji suddenly left all of us on 13th July 2022. I met him on 28th June, hardly 15 days before he passed away and he was very much active as usual. Unfortunately, he left all of us but one good thing I observed was that he did not suffer himself being bed-ridden or the family members serving him on the bed for a long time. I pray his Soul remains in Peace.

“ Anil ji use to come up with many publications on behalf of VANI, which helped develop the perspective of the grassroots organizations. ”

Datta Patil, YUVA

Tribute to Anil Singh Ji

I never met Anilji in person but knew him virtually and as a distinguished sector leader. I also came to know that he was Founder CEO of VANI. I have always heard about his working style and his immense contribution to this sector.



Nationally and Globally, he had successfully raised issues for upliftment of the marginalized and betterment of society. A good soul has parted ways, but his soul has touched so many lives. We as sector people will try to remember him every year by organising some event for the betterment of the society.

“I know his family must be undergoing the biggest loss with great difficulty. May God give them courage to overcome this sudden tragedy. My sincere condolences, and please know that we are with you in this grief.”

Hemal Kamat, Concept Sansthan

Letter For a Dear Friend!



Dear Anil.

Your telephone seems to be Switch off; Intermitted calls to seek guidance and assistance regarding programs and activities of SANSAD have stopped. Where have you gone?

Your sudden disappearance reminds me of the several interesting and exciting moments spent together.

Our association @ VANI for more than two decades was not only intensive but a rewarding one. Your style of working in small teams and developing programmes and activities for the ever demanding and expanding Voluntary Sector was amazing!

The code of conduct for the sector, guidelines for good policy and practice through a series of accountability dialogues was a great effort. Our work in capturing the work of Veteran Members of the Sector and converting them to a ground-breaking publication "Living Legends" was itself a seminal piece altogether.

Developing internal systems and processes for VANI including your own performance review framework was an easy piece of work. Despite serious difference and endless arguments for refining the systems, you had always been a dear friend and a colleague.

The intimate and engaging moments we spent together during our organisational associations with NCAS in Pune, WNTA, CBGA and myriad other events at Delhi and across the country were unforgettable times!

You were not only committed to the member organisations but were also a caring leader for their families, as an extended member of their family. How can I forget your family's visit to Odisha when our children spent some quality time. Whether the sea beach at Puri or the dining table at home – it was a great family Get Together.

I will always remember with delight the wedding event of Sharad's daughter at Jaipur –when both of us did the "Abhishek" ritual together with Sharad and his family.

We are missing you Anil. Our sincere prayer to HIM to provide strength and capacity to Bimla and the family to withstand the shock.

Omshanti

“ Our work in capturing the work of Veteran Members of the Sector and converting them to a ground-breaking publication "Living Legends" was itself a seminal piece altogether. ”

Jagadananda, CYSD

Remembering Shri Anil Singh

It was a shock to know that Anil Singh ji is no more. Just sometime ago we had spoken to each other. I have known Anil for more than three decades and have had the occasion of participating with him in some national and international programmes/events also.

I very fondly remember our travel together along with other colleagues to Rome and other places. Anil was a perfect person and very highly committed to the cause of Secularism and Pro-Poor actions. Equity and Social Justice was his prime concern and he used to get offended if spoken against even during discussions.



“ I know his family must be undergoing trauma of this tremendous loss. May God provide them courage to overcome this grief and may his soul rest in peace. ”

Jayant Kumar, CASA

Death of Anil Calls for Introspection in the Voluntary Sector



Anil Singh departed abruptly without notice and we miss him. He was a jolly good fella is the best way to describe my association with him. He was driven by Socialist principles as he comes from Bihar which had stalwarts following and practicing that ideology - Ram Manohar Lohia, and the JP movement that sought to deepen the practice of democracy and our constitutional values.

Such background was the ideal choice to drive Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) which was founded by the best NGO leaders. His background and amicable nature of engagement helped him succeed in working with multiple players in the development sector including members of various hues, donors, international agencies, and most

importantly government and the political class. His leadership helped VANI grow fast and with credibility. With more wickets of our dear friends to fall, this is a moment to honestly look back.

Anybody gets tired and business as usual doing the same thing. VANI board rightly wanted new energy and so he left VANI after considerable time it has found a person of quality, integrity, and humility in Harsh Jaitli. Thinking back I feel Anil should have been made Emirtus and given the responsibility and resources for something new that he could deliver with his capacity. It could be to increase and widen the membership, synergy between members to maximize development learning and impact or in international work. I say this because he was a capable worker with the appetite to break new ground. But he found himself loose amidst his energy and adrenalin. Things changed with donors quitting or downsizing and resources were getting scarce. Only institutions with track records and partnerships were able to adjust to the new turn of events. We can to some extent shape the world but must be pragmatic to redraw and innovative in the creative use of our scarce resources and goodwill. An emeritus status at VANI with directed tasks and resources would have provided the time needed for Anil to recraft his skills and seek areas that fructify his potential.

He then founded SANSAD and I am its Chair since its inception. He needed to work and I felt that will be a good way before he takes a sojourn. Initially, he got some resources that were donor-liking projects rather than what the individual likes to do is capable of successfully delivering and enjoys the journey. His effort for Global and regional networking was driven by western agencies or egos of local bosses, each holding their fiefdom and rising scarce resources. Only amidst high tide will all boats float and those days are over. He moved to organic farming and did not deliver much. He joined marches and processions, none of which was a continuum of work he was capable and talented for. Due to links and repute, he could raise resources. But SANSAD resources were falling and COVID shut even the little window of hope to take forward the work.

This brings my next point: to develop core competence and capability in the fields we work on, as the weak have no place in the emerging development work. They need other forms of that I finally end with. So solidarity and sharing are the only way forward and imbibing those values among us in the NGO sector and finding ways to successfully deliver and centered on "caring" is the best tribute VANI can do for the memory of Anil. It is a safeguard mechanism to keep ourselves in good spirits and always in action, as serving society cannot be taken away from us by age or a changing world.

“His background and amicable nature of engagement helped him succeed in working with multiple players in the development sector including members of various hues, donors, international agencies, and most importantly government and the political class. His leadership helped VANI grow fast and with credibility.”

K S Gopal, Center for Environment Concerns

Anil Singh- A Leader, A Visionary

I first met Anil Singh in the 1990 as I was involved in the founding of Charkha with my friend late Sanjoy Ghose and we requested Anil Singh to join the Charkha Board . He was so positive and continued as its Treasurer till his last day.

Later in the nineties, we were fellow partners and comrades in various surveys. During the founding of Charities Aid Foundation , Anil and I had created campaigns to make the sector more charitable to Tax and FCRA, and create a level playing field which was Anil Singh's idea, and try to make FCRA on the Lines of FEMA and move it to Ministry of Finance.

His energy and enthusiasm was terrific and he made me a member of VANI. His ability to connect to grass root voluntary agencies and people from different backgrounds was terrific and very humane.

Anil Singh had one significant contribution, which was to welcome more and more people in the sector and his complete involvement until he passed away. He was involved in the "Remember Champaran movement" and walked in the villages of Champaran.



“A true leader and visionary of
voluntarism and will be missed greatly.
A big loss to the sector.”

Mathew Cherian, CARE India

Anil K. Singh: A Networker Par Excellence



The first thing that comes to mind when I think of Anil Singh was his talent to connect-with individuals, groups, institutions and organisations across the country and globally. He networked across social classes, educational backgrounds, causes and sizes that embraced all diversities. The equations he could establish across board – from an activist of a rural area to doyens of the Indian sector to the global trail blazers contributed significantly to cementing of VANI as a pan India network and enabled its contribution to national and

international discourse and practices of the voluntary sector.

These dividends of networking did not come cheap. Anil Singh invested big- in terms of his time, concern, commitment and warmth. VANI had a simple guest house when I first entered the voluntary sector in 1995 and I started staying there on my visits to Delhi as it gave the opportunity to meet activists from across the country. The bonus was the company of stalwarts like Dr. A. K. Basu, Binoy Acharya, Biplab Haleem, Panchu, Gregory Placid, Bharat Bhushan, Datta Patil, Arbind Kumar, Tiwari Ji and many others who introduced me to different causes and innovations making it my nursery of learning about the sector. But above all it was the presence of Anil Singh beyond office hours to be with us and contribute to illuminating discussions late into the night that made VANI a second home and soldered our relationship with the organisation. I am sure most members feel a sense of belonging with VANI and the credit should go to Anil Singh.

Another endearing characteristic was an extremely helping nature. Functioning as a national network but being based in Hyderabad, COVA organized many programs in Delhi and it was always Anil Singh and the VANI Team who provided the base support. In 1997, COVA had organized Festival of the Sub Continent to commemorate 50 years of Independence from British rule involving India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Among many artists and eminent personalities from across the Sub Continent, the legendary Pakistani folk singer Reshma was also invited to perform in Hyderabad. She was received and hosted by Anil Bhai and his team in Delhi on way to Hyderabad. In Hyderabad we faced some blast of her "5 Star artistic nakhras" and I was literally out of my wits. After the program when I narrated this to Anil Singh, he shared his experience of Delhi that was bad but he had not uttered a word about what he faced as a host and was happy that the program went well. That was Anil Singh: help, serve and no complaints.

“Anil is no more with us. But he will be forever with us.”

Maut unki kare jin ka zamana afsos

Youn to duniya mein sabhi aate hai marne ke liya!

(Death is of those who are mourned by all- otherwise everyone comes here to die.)

Mazher Hussain, COVA Peace Network

Message of Condolence

Dear Friends: I was deeply shocked when I received the sad message from Shri. Panchakshara of SIPA Chennai that our dear friend Anil Singh ji is no more. This was really difficult for me to believe that Anil bhai could suddenly depart from all of us without any warning. I worked with Anil bhai during my days in Delhi. As treasurer of VANI, I had the opportunity to work closely with him in the early years of VANI. He worked very hard and also played an important role in shaping VANI and its activities in the initial stages. He took special interest in reaching out to small voluntary organisations in rural areas of India and helped them in the capacity development that was necessary to deal with local problems. In our last discussion I remember that he made a presentation about his plans to move back to Bihar and focus more on a political process that would transform rural Bihar. We closed our meeting with an agreement that I would also join him in this important work and mobilise support from other like-minded organisations as well. I am sorry that our dear Anil bhai is not here to take his dream forward but I am sure that his friends and colleagues will do so in a serious way. The voluntary sector in India is going through the most challenging time at this moment. We will miss Anil bhai greatly as he was a constant source of strength and an inspiration for many of us.



“ In our last discussion I remember that he made a presentation about his plans to move back to Bihar and focus more on a political process that would transform rural Bihar. ”

P. V. Rajagopal, Ekta Parishad

Anil- An Elder Brother and Mentor

It was a big shock to me to hear the sudden demise of Anil Bhai. I first met him in VANI in 1989 after my full-time entry into the voluntary sector. Since then we could maintain a very close professional and



personal relationship with him-as a mentor and an elder brother. This relationship was very useful and helpful for me to re-articulate my perspectives on voluntarism and voluntary action.

He was a person who treated everyone equally- irrespective of their position-and was very supportive to the needy, especially those who are in crisis situations.

As the CEO of VANI, he could argue very passionately for the independent identity and adequate space for the voluntary sector. Several voluntary activists and social workers were really influenced by his vision and thought provoking insights on voluntary action. His wise advices and timely guidance helped me a lot to sharpen my understanding on voluntarism and voluntary work and also nurturing and promoting a state level network of organizations in Kerala.

I have numerous joyful memories of our participation in several regional, national and international programs together along with lively evening parties. He will be missed always for the care, concern and friendly support offered to me and many other colleagues. Two weeks before his death he called me and enquired about the situation in Kerala and invited me to Delhi to meet him. I agreed to meet him in September and spend two days with him. I didn't know that it will be his last invitation.

Though we lost his physical presence I believe his spiritual presence and good memories will always be with us and his contributions to the sector and the community will be remembered for ever.

Pray for his soul rest in peace. (I pray that his soul rest in peace)

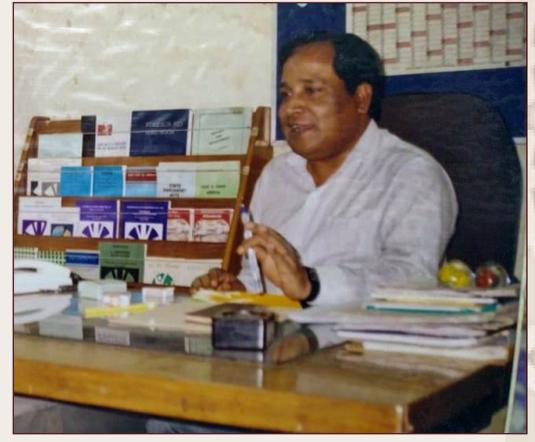
“He was a pioneer in promoting linkages and networking in the sector and his continuous and committed interventions at various levels resulted in the formulation and cabinet approval of a national policy for the voluntary sector.”

Gregory Placid, Sahayi

We will miss Anil bhai, who brought people, organisations and institutions together

Over time some friendships acquire a patina, a shine that represents both depth and immediacy. My friendship with Anil Singh is something like that. It was a great comfort of knowing that he was there as a friend, around the corner.

For those working in social organisations, there would be few who wouldn't have known who Anil Singh was. He helped establish the Voluntary Action Network of India (VANI) in the late 1980s. For this purpose, he used his ability and experience as a networker par excellence. While he never hid his politics or his ideology, he never carried it on his sleeve. He reached out to social organisations, the government and individuals across the political and ideological spectrum.



Forever the institution builder, Anil bhai also helped found South Asian Network for Social & Agricultural Development (SANSAD) in 2004, which he led as Secretary-General till the last. Anil bhai was a man who seldom spoke of his achievements, let alone boast of them. It is only when I got to know him better that I came to discover him, and his thoughts. I got the opportunity of working closely with Anil bhai in India, when John Samuel and I had the responsibility to support collective development of the Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, under the aegis of the Millennium Development Goals Campaign in Asia in 2005-6. Anil bhai was a friend of a friend. He was one, we knew, could bring people and formations together. He had done so in VANI, and though he had just about left VANI to the next generation of leaders, it was clear that for a campaign like Wada Na Todo, which was about governance accountability and involved grounded campaign advances, we would get tail winds better with Anil bhai's presence. Ever so approachable, and never one to say no to civic efforts, Anil bhai with his full energy joined the processes. His ideas contributed to the naming of the campaign itself "Wada Na Todo Abhiyan" and its popular Hindi filmi tinge. It seems like just the other day. We came to know each other better as time went by. Ten years ago, Anil joined the collective effort to set up Centre for Agrarian Research and Education in the South (CARES). In fact, he was the one who had the organization formed. Together with thought leaders from across global South, we worked to run this effort to co-produce the Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy. We worked together on the centennial of the Champaran Satyagraha. In this effort we worked with Samwad and my colleagues in the Bihar state team of ActionAid Association. In all this Anil bhai remained a man with a simplicity of approach, infectious smiles and of deeply socialist thinking. His actions were informed by a deep commitment to furthering equality and justice, building togetherness and solidarity for the society he dreamt of and our Constitution promised. Anil was an eternal optimist, and one never to stop, always inviting others and readily joining all who invite him for the shared visions.

“ I shall miss you my friend, Rest in Power.”

Sandeep Chachra, ActionAid Association

Reminiscing Anil Singh



It was impossible to believe that Anil Singh Sir passed away. I will always remember the insightful discussions we had almost every week on different socio-political and global issues for the past several years.

I have known Sir closely while working in VANI during the late 1990s. Having just started one's career, there was a lot to learn. Under his guidance, I definitely learned a lot. I had the privilege of writing three books. I had just finished the book on India's Living Legend when he asked me to put together another book on the contribution of voluntary organizations in different sectors. He said I had only two months to travel, interview leaders in the voluntary sector in different parts of the country, and write the book. I said it was extremely difficult. I still distinctly remember on how he motivated me and said there was no need to be tensed.

He was more confident than I about the outcome of putting the book together. And there was I, handing him over the manuscript, within two months. I felt elated at how he virtually cajoled me into writing my third book.

Definitely, there are a lot of fond memories which I will always cherish of working with him and also after that, through the conversations and discussions.

“ My understanding of the grassroots and how voluntary organizations function across the country was crystallized while working with him during the VANI days.”

Vedabhyas Kundu, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti

Tribute to Shri Anil Singh

Shri Anil Singh is one of the contributors who worked silently and laid the foundation for building the edifice of VANI. He is a very committed person for the sector and fought tooth and nail for the draconian changes in laws affecting voluntary agencies and boldly took the fight to the corridors of authority during his period in VANI.



He was involved in creating and enabling the environment for the sector. He worked hard along with eminent people in organizing the National Meeting of the Voluntary Sector which was inaugurated by Shri Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister who openly supported the voluntary sector as one of the horses for the five horse chariot of the government. He worked hard with other prominent leaders of Civil Society for creating for the first time the Volunteer Sector Policy- but this has not seen the eight of the day yet.

Shri Anil worked hard to create a good governance pattern for the grass root level organisations. During his period many seminars have been conducted on transparency of the volunteer sector and involved in making the sector more transparent and also arranging to take the positive factors to the media. The volunteer agencies and all of us will remember his contribution and pray for the departed soul.

“ He worked hard along with eminent people in organizing the National Meeting of the Voluntary Sector which was inaugurated by Shri Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister who openly supported the voluntary sector as one of the horses for the five horse chariot of the government. ”

V K Shivkumar, Gandhi Gram Trust

A Silent Worker of Voluntary Sector and a Great Networker



Anil Bhai left us suddenly, unexpectedly and untimely. The COVID pandemic reduced the frequency of meeting with him in the last three years. His demise is a great loss for the voluntary sector and comrades.

I had an opportunity to work with Anil Bhai during his VANI days when Samarthan was getting established and relevance of

network of voluntary organisation was closely realised by me. Anil Bhai was trying to build state level networks in initial years. Later, he was spending energy to establish Credibility Alliance for the accountability and transparency of the sector.

Soon after he relinquished his position in VANI, we worked together as coconveners to build Wada Na Todo, a campaign initiated for Millennium Development Goals. Within a year of establishing WNT, a large convention of more than five thousand grassroots workers and volunteers was organised in Ramlila Maidan, Delhi. Co-conveners Anil Bhai planned it meticulously, connected with voluntary organizations and activists across the country to make it a success. His networking abilities and connections with grassroots groups were amazing. Moreover, I realised that his guidance to plan the event was sound.

“Anil Bhai used to meet with great warmth and infectious smile all the time. I will miss his presence immensely in the meetings of voluntary organizations.”

Yogesh Kumar, Samarthan

Anil Bhai... as many knew

That dear Anil Bhai's vision for the Voluntary sector came into public domain when he could charter the formation of VANI - Voluntary Agencies Network in India during early 90s.

As the promoter of a Network for Voluntary agencies involved in Livelihood in Southern States, I became curious to meet and interact with him and so my organisation SIPA took the membership with VANI from 1992. We interacted with him and other leaders & activists since those days and it became greater cooperation and collaboration with my active association when I got elected to the Board of VANI in 1999. During our Board meeting we had intensive interaction on various issues / concerns that were common to civil society. His initiatives towards a policy for civil society, bringing out regular News Letters, publication of research papers and a range of studies for the Sector is noteworthy.



Greatest effort of Anil Bhai was in getting the land for VANI at DWARAKA, through friends like Mathew Cherian, needs to be duly recognised by the Sector. Though away from VANI, he always met many of us regularly during our visits to Delhi and his visits to many of us in our cities, is proof of our bonding friendship till his last days. In today's lifestyle and when we cannot be sure of the future, his contribution to the Voluntary Sector and Civil society will be and needs to be cherished lifelong for many of us. We all need to do something more to cherish his memory to the Voluntary sector.

May his soul rest in peace and may his memory keep inspiring us in continuing our commitment to the sector.

“His initiatives towards a policy for civil society, bringing out regular News Letters, publication of research papers and a range of studies for the Sector is noteworthy.”

Panchaksharam. K, (Panchu), SIPA Fair Trade

Memories



About Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)

VANI is a national network of Indian Voluntary Development Organisations (VDOs). Currently VANI has 624 members with an outreach to around 10,000 VDOs across India. The membership of VANI ranges from grass roots to the national organizations. The members work on a range of priority development issues of the government including education, health, nutrition, integrated child development, livelihood, skill development, environment, natural resource management, climate change, water and sanitation, emergency response and preparedness, agriculture, poverty and so on, in some of the most remote areas of the country. In the year 2017-18 our network collectively reached out to over 32 million people belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups including children, disabled people, women, elderly, farmers, dalit, tribals, disaster survivors, unemployed, youth, LGBT, sex workers etc. VANI through its efforts and strategies aims to build a strong civil society sector not only at national but regional and local level as well.

VANI was set up with the mission to promote voluntarism, create space for the sector by fostering value based voluntary action. VANI's interventions are focused to strengthen the external and internal enabling environment. To ensure the external enabling environment, VANI conducts evidence-based advocacy which includes regulatory frameworks and resource generation. In order to achieve this VANI works with the government, private sector, bilateral, multilaterals and other stakeholders. For strengthening the internal enabling environment, VANI works towards building resilience and promoting accountability, transparency and compliance through the interactive educational events and information dissemination. VANI strives to become a resource centre by conducting evidence-based research; publishing studies, articles and reports not only at state level but national and global level as well.



Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)

(An Apex Body of Voluntary Organisations)

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