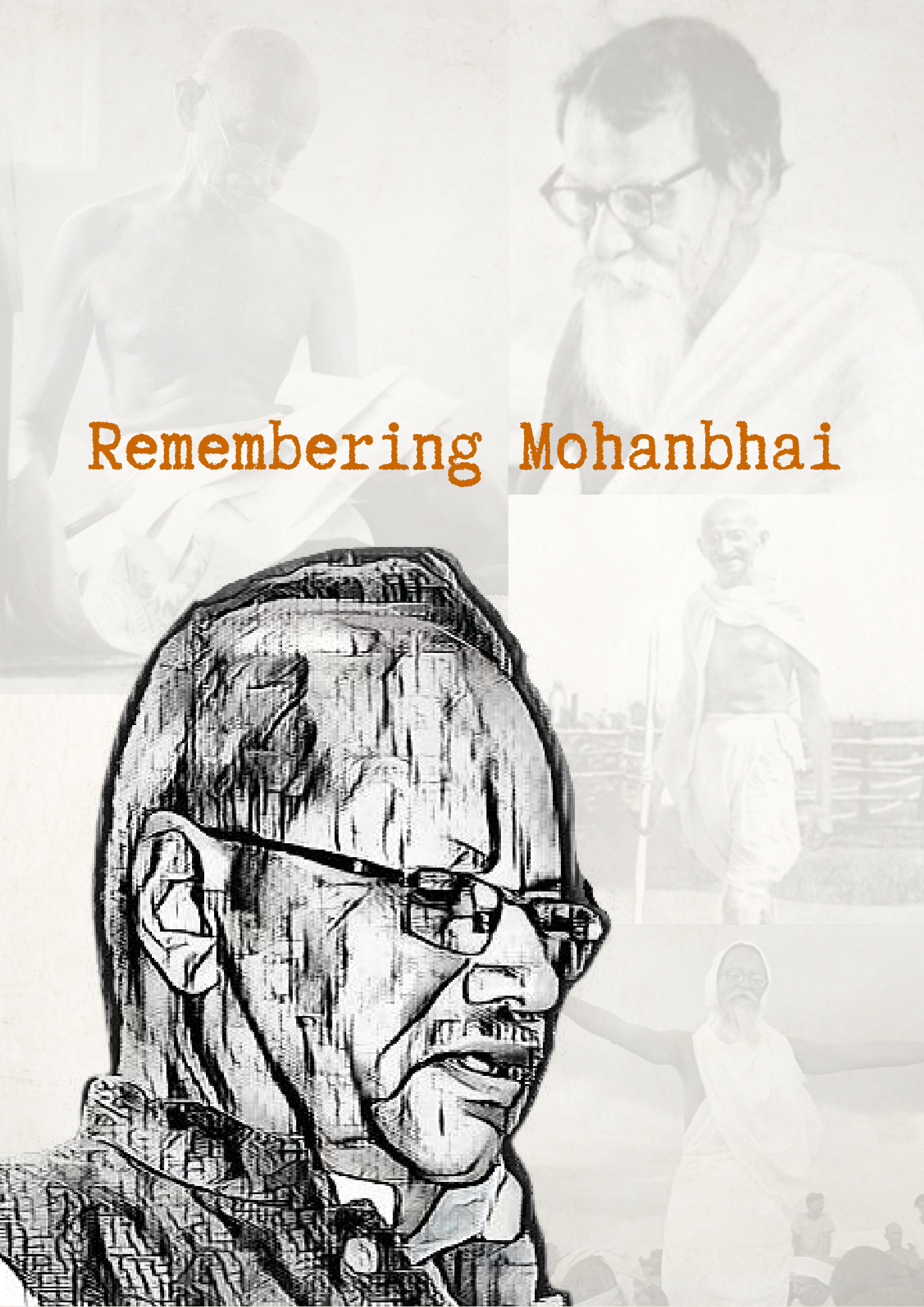


# Remembering Mohanbhai



# Preface

## **Mohan Hirabai Hiralal**

is a social activist and advocate of local self-governance.

Born in 1949 in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, Mohan studied at Lokmanya Tilak Vidyalyaya and Janata College. He was inspired by Jayaprakash Narayan to join the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini and became a life-long activist working for Gram Swaraj, peoples power.

As a Sahayogi Mitra, collaborator friend, Mohan worked closely with the people of Mendha Lekha, a tribal village in Maharashtra, to nurture nonviolent mechanisms for inclusive and participatory local self-governance through collective decision-making by consensus.

In 2016, Mohan received the  
Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work.

The intent of this booklet is to share what we learnt from Mohanbhai. We hope it will help you dip into the immense well of wisdom that he was.

# From the book “Inspirations”

Mohan Hiralal Hirabai  
Deep democracy at work

Over 20 years of work at Mendha Lekha has created a 'wonder of the world'. A village of 500-odd that has dissolved its property into the commons, acquired rights of its forest (making a surplus from selling that produce) and felt powerful enough to claim that it is its own government! And all this, working with full consent - 100%.

Enabling this as a “kalyan mitra” is Mohanji, a man with deep belief in Vinoba's ideas of non-violence and actioning them. Through the model of study circles combined with gram sabhas, empowerment has been created at an unprecedented level, located at the heart of a conflict area in Gadchiroli district.

## **What you mean to me:**

You have shown me a path to allow my knowledge and experience to co-exist with the intent to include everyone and build the willingness to walk with the “slowest” person, valuing their wisdom as well.

## **The magic moment:**

Sharing about Mendha Lekha, Mohanji said that once there is a collective alignment, the sound of the “WE” that emerges from it goes very very deep. (Us ‘hum’ ki avaaaz bahut gehri hoti hai). Wow!!!

## **The way you ‘lead’:**

Mohanji has the capacity to engage in dialogue for long durations, listening, engaging and discussing from a space of deep equality. He has the patience required to understand as well as explain, deeply believing in the power of ‘created’ knowledge that emerges out of dialogue.

**Real life applications:**

- Mohanji's big insight is to separate knowledge creation from decision making. Do this one thing and you radically equalize power.
- Trusting nature based design - to work with people who innately love conversation and understanding things more deeply as the focal points of study circles.
- Creating commons and using those to educate oneself about the power of the collective.

**Supporting the work:**

Mohanbhai is keen to take the Mendha model and apply it in different contexts by adapting it. If you'd like to embark on the path to this radical democracy, it will support expanding the work.

**Reach out when:**

When you have a dilemma about a democratic decision stuck in a collective process.

# Ahimsa Conversation



[Watch here](#)

Mohan Hirabai Hiralal, who was deeply inspired by Jayaprakash Narayan and Vinoba Bhave, talks about his experiences in working for local self-governance over several decades -- particularly in the tribal village of Mendha Lekha. He explains how and why his confidence in the power and efficacy of nonviolence has grown.

# Conversations with BRM

- **Adhyayan circles with Mohan ji**

- [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CN52OKBWA7s2goAnj9NM\\_GycHhs8htp7/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CN52OKBWA7s2goAnj9NM_GycHhs8htp7/view?usp=drive_link)
- [https://drive.google.com/file/d/17vU7zqe-XUBuRWkIRagR950-a-6RUMoj/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17vU7zqe-XUBuRWkIRagR950-a-6RUMoj/view?usp=drive_link)

- Young people conversing with Mohan ji around SarvAnumati, daily life questions, how can we practice SarvAnumati in the city, etc. recorded by John Dsouza: <https://youtu.be/iRqjTkUNRf8>

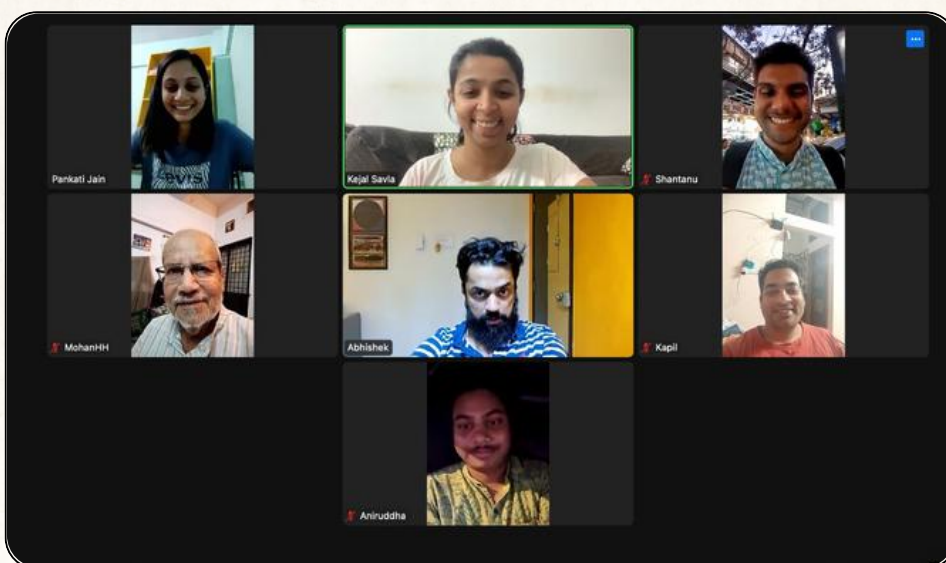
- A short series that shares the idea of SarvAnumati/

SarvSahamati traveling from Gandhi to Vinoba to village Mendha to a group of individuals in Mumbai.

- Ep. 1 - <https://youtu.be/j6MT7boHKKQ?si=o6-mi8zeEjzjJts4>.
- Ep. 2 - <https://youtu.be/jnBGBQBqjCg?si=341cJ16Ov8gz63hF>
- Ep. 3 - <https://youtu.be/H6YpwXI8tjw?si=SEfPbqgmvi-khlof>



Meeting Mohanbhai in Nagpur, 17th September 2023



Adhyayan call with Mohan bhai, 11th April 2024

# An article about our journey



[Read here](#)

# A conversation

PODCAST SERIES: INSPIRATIONS: CONVERSATIONS ON A NEW  
WORLD

## Conversation with Mohanbhai

▶ 0:00 / 35:47



[Listen here](#)

In this conversation Abhishek and Mohanji speak about the idea of decision making with full consent (Sarvanumati). They explore this deep democratic method from a pedagogical lens as a way to deepen ideas of non-violence and equality in people. A bilingual conversation, it will give you a sense of how a methodology rooted in Indic culture is relevant even today.

# Some learnings

- **Mohanbhai shares:**

- निर्भय बनो  
सुनता हूँ या पढ़ता हूँ तो अच्छा लगता है। बनना भी चाहता हूँ। लेकिन मुझे इन बातों से भय लगता है। वह दूर कर मैं कैसे निर्भय बनूँ? कृपया मार्गदर्शन करें।
- मुझे बहुमत से भय लगता है। बहुमत मुझे अल्पमत बना देता है। अल्पमत होने से मेरी बात सुनना और उस में कुछ तथ्य हो तो उसे समझनेकी जरूरत भी बहुमत को नहीं होती। बहुमत कभीभी हिंसक और आक्रामक हो सकता है।
- मुझे भीड़ से भय लगता है। भीड़ को उकसाया या भड़काया जा सकता है। भीड़ विवेकहीन और हिंसक हो सकती है।
- मुझे चुनाव लड़ कर बहुमत द्वारा सत्ता हासिल करने की इच्छा रखने वाली पार्टियों से भय लगता है।
- मुझे चुनाव लड़े बगैर सत्ता, सम्पति और बाहुबल/बन्दुक से आतंक पैदा कर सत्ता हासिल करने की इच्छा रखने वाली पार्टियों से भी भय लगता है।
- मुझे जाती और धर्म आधारित संघटनों से भय लगता है।
- मुझे पुरुष-सत्ताक व्यवस्था से भय लगता है।
- मुझे आमरण उपोषण का भय दिखाकर सत्याग्रह करने वालों से भय लगता है।
- सत्य क्या है इस का निर्णय बातचीत से ना होने पर निर्णय करने के लिए कुश्ती या युद्ध का आवाहन करने वालों से मुझे भय लगता है।
- मुझे कोई मार डालेगा इस का मुझे भय लगता है।
- स्वतंत्रता से आने वाली जिम्मेदारियों से मुझे भय लगता है। गुलामी में मैं सुख और सुरक्षितता का अनुभव करता हूँ। कोई दूसरा मेरे लिए सब कुछ कर देगा यह मुझे अच्छा लगता है।

An edition of Vinoba's  
“Gandhi's historic mission”  
abridged by Mohanbhai



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## GANDHI'S HISTORIC MISSION

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Vinoba

[Read here](#)

# Tributes

- <https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/gadchiroli-forest-rights-crusader-mohan-hirabai-hiralal-passes-away-at-75-leaves-behind-legacy-of-empowerment>
- <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/gandhian-activist-mohan-hiralal-passes-away-his-contribution-to-menda-lekha-recalled/cid/2079229>
- <https://www.lokmat.com/nagpur/senior-gandhian-activist-mohan-hirabai-hiralal-passes-away-nagpur-a-a309/>
- <https://www.loksatta.com/nagpur/pillar-of-the-mawa-nate-mawa-raj-movement-mohan-hirabai-hiralal-passes-away-rgc-76-mrj-95-4843440/>

# In conclusion

Mohanbhai's memory, legacy and work continue to live with us. We are committed to taking this ideas forward through our work.

All we have is deep gratitude that such a beautiful soul crossed our life.

Jai Jagat

Abhishek  
26 Jan 2025