**Home -**   
1. 3 Images with some captions  
2. Summary of Mayank sir’s life and one image

**About -**   
Horizontal timeline needed  
  
1. About GP with Image or Video  
2. Image or background video  
3. Biography with years - Ready  
  
**Projects -**   
  
1. Global Parli - 2016  
2. IAC - 2011  
3. AAP - 2014   
4. Remaking of Mumbai Federation - 2007  
5. RTI - 2003

6. NF - 2018  
7. MSW - 2019

8. Raisen - 2020

9. World Conference - 2010  
10. Citizen consensus candidate - 2007

Name, description, date/duration/year, Image, Link

\*\*Project detailed page

**Blogs -**

2 tabs - spirituality and nation building

**Media -**   
Content is ready

**Gallery -**

Images

3. Who Am I? As this book has been written in a style that is part-autobiographical, the events have to necessarily pass through the prism of my perspective. Thus it is important for you, the reader, to be acquainted with some of my values, beliefs and experiences. Growing up in a middle class family in Mumbai—one where my mother Chitraben and father Ramesh both worked tirelessly to make ends meet and bring up three children—I learnt the importance of valuing the little we had. My mother worked as an accountant in a private f irm for many years, while my father was involved with textiles and was later an estate broker. Due to some unfortunate setbacks to my father’s business, we all had to start earning a living while in school and college. I tutored children and made some money, but it was Bharat, my elder brother, an architect, who took on the onerous responsibility of contributing to the family kitty while studying. My sister Hiran, an architect, too, chipped in by working while studying. This situation is not uncommon— it is representative of many middle class families. People who have not faced penury sometimes romanticize it, but those who have experienced a dearth of resources know that there is no bigger disease thanpoverty. Honestly, beyond everyday inconveniences, if poverty is distressing it is because of the indignity and humiliation one is subjected to. I was sensitive to this even as child—and as I grew up, I came to have zero tolerance for arrogance and the assumption that a ‘superior’ could humiliate someone struggling. In fact, a few months ago, I got off my friend’s car only because he was talking rudely to his driver. I was a bright student, obsessed with reading. There were days when I’d forget to eat my lunch, so engrossed would I be with the stories I came across. My reading list was eclectic—ranging from science and politics to post-independence history and autobiographies, and most importantly, humour. Arun Shourie was a journalist I greatly admired. In fact, there were times when I’d rush to the railway station at the crack of dawn to collect the f irst copy of the day’s paper and devour Shourie’s forthright writing—I was such an admirer of his articles against the abuse of power that I could not bear to wait till 7 am, when the paper would get delivered home! Each book, every article opened my mind to possibilities, far from those battles of subsistence, and fuelled my desire to work with a large canvas. Could I apply my intelligence and ability to transform my great country? I used to muse. This desire to propel national change was also shaped by the political leaders I looked up to. I used to enjoy listening to Madhu Limaye, George Fernandes and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, but, by far, the biggest influence in my life has been Mahatma Gandhi. I would spend hours in Mani Bhavan (Gandhiji’s ashram in Mumbai, which also held—no surprises here—a library). The simple prose and authenticity of Gandhiji’s My Experiments withTruth—and his strength of character demonstrated by his openness, courage of conviction and willingness to accept his faults—touched me deeply. If my commitment to work for the nation was strengthened, it was because of the events of the 1970s. I was seventeen when the Allahabad High Court disbarred Indira Gandhi as a member of Parliament (MP) and banned her from contesting the elections for the next six years on account of electoral malpractices; the case had been brilliantly argued by Shanti Bhushan. On 25 June 1975, less than a fortnight after the verdict, Mrs Gandhi declared the Emergency. With startling speed, opposition leaders were imprisoned, including Jayaprakash Narayan, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani. Freedom of the press was muzzled, censorship was imposed and civic liberties were curtailed. As I watched a pall of fear envelope the country, my blood boiled. I had to do something! A young, idealistic student, I would slip away from college lectures and participate in protests, join street plays and liaise with activists. But it was all to no avail . . . the dark days dragged on. Twenty-one months later, Mrs Gandhi, in a classic case of misplaced confidence, called for fresh elections, released all political prisoners and lifted the Emergency. Four opposition parties—the Congress (O), the Jan Sangh, the Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party—decided to f ight the elections (and her) under a single banner called the Janata Party. I started campaigning for our local Janata Party candidate to the exclusion of all else, including my studies. Several ordinary people did. Finally, on 20 March 1977, it was announced that for the first time in independentIndia’s history, the Congress had been routed; the Janata Party had come to power. Democracy had been upheld. India had won. It was a moment of ecstasy. But before any of us could bask in the joy of this victory, the Janata government started showings signs of instability. The leaders, unable to rise above their personal and political ambitions, fought like cats and dogs, which finally led to the collapse of the government. The Janata Party’s betrayal and its representatives’ naked lust for power shook the country—so much so that until the IAC movement roughly thirty-five years later, no one was willing to invest faith in a new set of leaders again. On my part, I was in agony. As a young crusader, willing to lay his life for the nation, I felt cheated. I wanted to speak out—but I was too young and inconsequential to be heard. Disillusioned, I quit public life, got married, had children and started earning a living. I began my own little initiative. As a small businessman, I had to get over thirty ‘permissions’—some of them monthly, some quarterly and some annually—for conducting my business. Government clerks and officers would harass me for bribes. There were two options before me—fight them and, in turn, get slapped with so many penalties or notices that my business would stop; or succumb and pay them off. I admit, I took the more cowardly route, and justified this to myself by saying that I had a family and workers to support. Over time, however, I also grew increasingly angry; I longed to fight the system and change it, so that the next set of Mayank Gandhis would not have to confront similar episodes of blackmail.In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana, the conniving brother, and Bheema, one of the heroes, fought one another for a long period of time, without either coming any closer to a decisive victory. It was only when Lord Krishna showed Bheema Duryodhana’s weak spot that the battle could be won by the hero. Perhaps, all I needed to do was find that elusive ‘weak spot’ to transform the country. I kept searching . . . And then, something started happening to me. I had lived in Mumbai all my life; I thought I had grown immune to images of squalor. Yet, suddenly, around the turn of the millennium, I started becoming increasingly sensitive to the scenes I witnessed—each time I’d pass the slums of Dharavi, I’d be moved to tears. What was happening? I had never been this way. Was the fire within me—one that I had suppressed for many years—reasserting itself? My growing unease made me start meditating. Every day, in silence, I’d try analyzing the inner workings of my mind. And one day, maybe a fortnight after I had started meditating, I had a spontaneous spiritual experience—call it a moment of epiphany—that was to alter my life forever. The experience was so ecstatic, dramatic, overwhelming and transformative that words are inadequate to describe it—and this book, in any case, isn’t the space to begin trying. Among the many transformations that the experience spawned, the one that stands out is that I suddenly became absolutely calm—from a ‘rajasic’ (angry, passionate) personality, I became ‘sattvic’ (calm, unruffled). The vitriol dissipated, and instead, I was left with this realization—who am I getting angry with? And for what? Everything is me. I have no doubt that spirituality is the source of all my strength and understanding. It also helped me gain clarity, so I now knew how I could serve the nation. People hold a range of different views regarding how a country can transform. Some say, ‘If you improve the judicial system, the nation will be rid of all corruption.’ Others say, ‘Education is the country’s future.’ Still others claim, ‘Reform administrative systems, and India will become great again.’ But I believe that, in a democracy, it is the political leadership that determines the nation’s fate. And for the best possible set of leaders, one needs a strong electoral process. There were two options before me in the path of nation-building. One was to create a people’s movement to pressurize the political system to such an extent that it was forced to make changes—after all, if the legislative, executive and judicial branches steer the country, and media (the fourth estate) acts as the watchdog, the fifth pillar necessarily is civil society. It may not have legal power, but it can use advocacy, judicial intervention and mass mobilization to bring change. The other option was to enter the political arena through elections, come to power and propel such changes from within. For this, a party with a foolproof electoral process was necessary, so that only the most worthy candidates would win, instead of those with dubious criminal records or communal inclinations, selected only because they happened to be ‘winnable’. To begin with a clean slate—to ensure, in other words, that elections are won without money-power or a divisive agenda—creating a new party would become essential.My foray into nation-building began by pushing for change from the outside. In 2006—even while holding on to my business—I became a part of a group that drafted the Nagar Raj Bill, an urban parallel of the Panchayati Raj Bill, for empowering the common citizens of cities and towns. Perhaps, a background is necessary. In 1993, guided by the vision of Rajiv Gandhi, the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts were passed for the devolution of power in rural and urban areas respectively. With the 73rd Amendment Act, the Panchayati Raj system came into existence in rural India, and resulted in a substantial improvement in the governance of villages. However, there was an urgent need to create strong institutions of self-governance in urban India. That’s where my group stepped in. Based on this concept of Nagar Raj, some of us conducted a landmark swaraj experiment in the 2007 Mumbai municipal elections. We selected one activist from each of the thirty-seven polling booths of the Juhu constituency. These activists chose Adolf D’souza as the consensus candidate. With Adolf as our independent contender, we successfully defeated all the strong nominees from mainstream parties, without using money, muscle or a divisive agenda. In fact, for the entire campaign, we had spent just Rs 57,000—most of which had been collected from local residents by passing a plastic bag for contributions. This was especially significant considering what one was up against. I remember, before Adolf’s victory, when I was on the way to our campaign office, I saw a huge rally of cars and bikes, with around 800 people shouting slogans in favour of an independent candidate. I was surprised,as we had not expected him to be a serious contender. It f inally turned out that he wasn’t. When the results were declared all he got were around 200 votes. Apparently, there were separate rates for campaigning and a separate price for votes. The independent candidate had paid for volunteers to campaign and not for votes. On another occasion, I tried spreading our campaign across the slums in the vicinity. My colleagues felt this effort was pointless—in their words, ‘Most of the votes of the slum-dwellers are bought.’ I, however, did not wish to be cynical; I wanted to involve the poor in our experiment. The day I visited the Irla slums near Vile Parle, what I saw startled me. There were hardly any able-bodied men or women at home. Almost everyone had gone campaigning. Those who were left behind were either the aged or children. When I tried announcing the name of our candidate, one well-built man emerged, who I later learnt was the local slumlord. He asked, ‘How much are you willing to pay per vote?’ I tried to tell him about the shining virtues of our candidate, how he planned to help the locality, and why we were committed to being honest. He laughed uproariously. I slunk away. After Adolf’s election victory in 2007, I quit working for civil society. I was bothered and irritated by petty nitpicking and ego fights. But in November 2008, when I saw Mumbai being attacked by terrorists, I decided that I could not stay away from working for the nation. I re-engaged with civil society. During the 2009 Maharashtra assembly elections, my team and I tried to create one more demonstrable model of swaraj. Parivartan later worked on a similar prototype in Delhi, and a citizen group attempted it in Bengaluru.This model, in a small way, became the blueprint for AAP’s experiment in the 2013 Delhi elections. Our candidate didn’t win in the 2009 Maharashtra assembly elections—he could not, given the powerful influence of the 4Cs (corruption, communalization, criminalization and caste politics) on electoral results. Mainstream political parties had become experts in manipulating the vote bank by giving the four Cs primacy. The rest were bound to languish. In the meantime, given my preoccupation with creating a workable model of swaraj, my business had been adversely impacted. My factory shut down due to a worker’s strike, and I was in dire financial straits. That’s when I got an unexpected call from an uncle who owned a large construction company. He spoke to me about the many dilapidated buildings in the island city of Mumbai, all of which were on the verge of collapsing. Indeed, over the years, many had, leading to the death of countless people. He offered me a job and—impelled by the desire to do something concrete at the grass-roots level, and equally, gain personal financial security—I accepted it. In the days to come, we created a strong and unique redevelopment model for Mumbai on a cluster basis—it was a model that offered a positive and practical solution to all stakeholders. This was an exhilarating period of my life, as I helped the government frame vital urban laws and policies, even while liaising with the bureaucracy, media entities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the judiciary. On the one hand, I engaged with global giants in the space of architecture and finance; on the other, I had to engage with the local populace and even gangsters.After hearing a lecture in Shanghai about urban planning in Mumbai, I was offered a place on the advisory board of the Chicago-based Council of Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH), the world’s largest not-for-profit body of global urban planners, architects and engineers, some of whom had been associated with such iconic buildings as the Burj Khalifa and Taipei 101. The irony was that I was neither a master planner nor an architect! But I was a fast learner, and soon, I was invited to speak and offer advice on master planning, and especially inner city redevelopment, in multiple countries. A world conference in Mumbai followed, attended by over a thousand top architects and planners from twenty-two countries, with seventy-seven of the world’s great speakers. Things were going rather well for me, and I was growing financially stable. That’s when life took a complete U-turn, as it is wont to do. In mid-2010, my uncle expired. Around six months later, Arvind Kejriwal asked me to help him with IAC (and later AAP). For a while I juggled both responsibilities, until one took precedence over the other . . . Now to go back to what would soon become one of the largest movements in the world . . .