

# Uncommon Sense

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**Dear David,**

Howdy! I hope this finds you in good spirits.

In the **Self-Development** column, we take a brief look at Gandhi, one of the great lights of the recent past.

Todd Myers, who is the Environmental Director of the Washington Policy Center in Seattle, published a stinging piece in *National Review* recently. It was so well presented that I decided to reprint it in my **Elephant in the Room** column, which I do with permission.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column, I reflect on turning 60.

And, as you have come to expect, I end with the **World of Words** column, giving you a wonderful word you can immediately use and sound smarter doing so.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

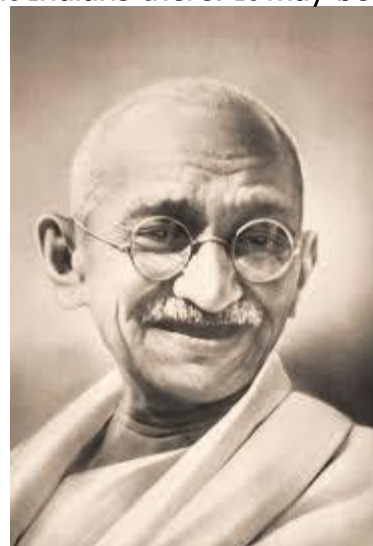


## **Self-Development**

### **Great Leaders of the Past: Gandhi (1869 - 1948)**

Born in 1869, Mahatma Gandhi married at age 13 -- more on that below. After completing Law School in Great Britain, he went to South Africa and worked ceaselessly to improve the rights of the immigrant Indians there. It may be that this most Indian of leaders, revered as Bapuji, or Father of the Nation, means more now to the world at large.

Foreigners don't have to wrestle with the confusion Indians feel today as they judge whether their nation has kept faith with his vision. For the rest of us, his image offers something much simpler - a shining set of ideals to emulate: individual freedom, political liberty, justice, nonviolent protest, passive resistance, religious tolerance.



The flesh-and-blood Gandhi was a most unlikely saint. Just conjure up his portrait: a skinny, bent figure, nut brown and naked except for a white loincloth, cheap spectacles perched on his nose, frail hand grasping a tall bamboo staff. *This was one of the century's great revolutionaries?* Yet this strange figure swayed millions with his hypnotic spell. His garb was the perfect uniform for the kind of revolutionary he was, wielding weapons of prayer and nonviolence more powerful than guns.

Saints are hard to live with, and this one's personal habits were decidedly odd. Mondays were "days of silence," when he refused to speak. A devoted vegetarian, he indulged in faddish dietetic experiments that sometimes came near to killing him. He eschewed all spices as a discipline of the senses. He napped every day with a mud poultice on abdomen and brow. He was so insistent on absolute regularity in his daily regimen that he safety-pinned a watch to his homespun dhoti, synchronized with the clock at his ashram. He scheduled his bowel movements for 20 minutes each morning and afternoon. "The bathroom is a temple," he said, and anyone was welcome to chat with him there. He had a cleansing enema every night.

Gandhi bathed in water but used ashes instead of soap and had himself shaved with a dull straight razor because new blades were too expensive. He was always sweeping up excrement that others left around. Cleanliness, he believed, was godliness. But his passion for sanitation was not just finicky hygiene. He wanted to teach Indian villagers that human and animal filth caused most of the disease in the land.

The man was not unaware of his legend in the making - or the 90-plus volumes that would eventually be needed to preserve his words. Everything Gandhi ever said and did was recorded by legions of secretaries. Then he insisted on going over their notes and choosing the version he liked best. "I want only one gospel in my life," he said.

More central and even more controversial was Gandhi's cult of celibacy. At 13, he dutifully married and came quickly to lust for his wife Kasturba. At 16 he left his dying father's side to make love to her. His father died that night, and Gandhi could never forgive himself the "double shame." He neglected and even humiliated Kasturba most of his life and only after her death realized she was "the warp and woof of my life."

At 36, convinced that sex was the basis of all impulses that must be mastered if man was to reach Truth, he renounced it. An aspirant to a godly life must observe the Hindu practice of Brahmacharya, or celibacy, as a means of self-control and a way to devote all energy to public service. Gandhi spent years testing his self-discipline by sleeping beside young women. He evidently cared little about any psychological damage to the women involved. He also expected his four sons to be as self-denying as he was.

Gandhi sought God, not orthodoxy. His daily prayers mixed traditional Hindu venerations with Buddhist chants, readings from the Koran, a Zoroastrian verse or two and the Christian hymn Lead, Kindly Light. That eclecticism reflected his great tolerance for all religions. "Truth," he preached, "is God," but he could never

persuade India's warring religious sects to agree. His spiritual mentors were just as broad - Jesus, Buddha, Socrates, his mother. Of the latter, Gandhi later said his formative childhood impression was of her "saintliness" and her devout asceticism infused his soul. The family's brand of Hinduism schooled him in the sacredness of all God's creatures.

In 1894, at the age of 25, Gandhi found his calling.

Working as a lawyer for an Indian firm in Durban, South Africa, Gandhi was booted out of a first-class train compartment and denied hotel accommodations because of his race.

Gandhi was embittered by the experience, and despite his ignorance of current events and terror of public speaking, he launched an all-out assault on South African prejudices, persuading the Natal Indian Congress to run a campaign of education and peaceful noncooperation with authorities.

He developed his creed of passive resistance against injustice, *satyagraha*, which means *truth-force*.

At the age of 60, Gandhi led one of the most dramatic protests of his career: a 240-mile march to the sea from Gandhi's settlement on the Sabarmati River to gather salt in defiance of British salt laws. Starting off with 79 followers, Gandhi attracted hundreds of protesters by his journey's end, sparking an unsurpassed wave of Indian nationalism. The British arrested Gandhi and 60,000 others in the Salt March's violent aftermath, but the campaign of civil disobedience had had its effect. One year later, in 1931, Gandhi would be invited to join talks in London on the status of India as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress party. He later received the title of *Mahatma* (Great Soul) from India's most well-known writer, Rabindranath Tagore.

In 1934, Gandhi, disenchanted with the reception given to his philosophy of nonviolence, quit the Congress party. Decrying industrialization's negative influences, he embarked on a national "constructive program" to encourage traditional village industries such as hand spinning and weaving, increase access to education and sanitation and eradicate the doctrine of untouchability. Spinning regularly at public gatherings and wearing only hand-spun clothes, Gandhi came to see the craft as an integral part of the nationalist mantra: "Here is an industry which will enable the Indian people not only to live as a nation, but to live as a nation producing real wealth."

Adherence to a strict vegetarian diet was the natural complement to Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence. For the Mahatma, food could never be at the center of a truly simple life. Eschewing tea, coffee and milk in addition to meat, and fasting regularly, Gandhi wrote that "restraint of the sexual and other passions becomes easy" for vegetarians.

No stranger to prisons, Gandhi, along with the entire leadership of the Congress party, was incarcerated in 1942 for the duration of World War II after demanding an immediate end to British colonial rule in return for Indian support of the war against Japan. "The allies have no moral cause for which they are fighting, so long

as they are carrying this double sin on their shoulders, the sin of India's subjection and the subjection of the Negroes and African races," Gandhi argued.

One story of Gandhi remains my favorite: evidently a woman came to Gandhi with her young son and asked Gandhi to lecture her son not to eat so much sugar. Gandhi pondered the request for a moment and then sent the woman away, instructing her to return to him in one week. Trusting that Gandhi must have some magnificent method to this madness, she faithfully walked away, but returned one week later with her son in tow. Gandhi faced the son and said, sternly, "You must not eat so much sugar!" Then he turned to walk away. The mother, perplexed at the simplicity of the statement, asked Gandhi why he did not simply deliver that same message the previous week. Gandhi, with a twinkle in his eye, said sheepishly, "Madam, last week *I* was eating too much sugar!"

Although Gandhi had some suspicions with the brand of Christianity he saw practiced in England and elsewhere, he certainly seemed to embrace the New Testament teaching to "bless them that curse you" (Matthew 5:44). On January 30th, 1948, his last day of life, while living in Delhi, at about 5:10 PM, Gandhi commenced his walk towards the garden where he was to attend a prayer meeting. As he was about to mount the steps of the podium to greet his audience an assassin named Nathuram Godse bent down in a gesture of respect, then pulled out a revolver and shot Gandhi three times in the chest. With bloodstains appearing over Gandhi's white woolen shawl, his hands still folded in greeting, Gandhi blessed his assassin: *He Ram! He Ram!* (Translation: "Oh, Lord," but with the sense of calling out a blessing from God to the man who had just shot him.)

Gandhi's death on January 30, 1948, at the hands of a fanatic Hindu in Delhi signaled an end to an era. To the thousands who attended his funeral, the new fight ahead was to secure India's status as a modern, secular state. Though he was idolized for his role in the struggle for independence, Gandhi's own desire for an epitaph was characteristically modest: "The only virtue I want to claim is truth and non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none."

## **The Elephant in the Room**

### **The Left's Cynicism Overshadows Its Environmentalism**

by Todd Myers

A recent letter sent to President Trump says a great deal about how cynical energy and environmental policy has become in the United States. An excerpt: "The impact of rising fuel prices on our economy and on family budgets is significant and widespread."

Those words of concern about the price of gas are from [a letter co-signed by Senate Democratic leader Charles Schumer](#). Ironically, Senator Schumer (D., N.Y.) has long supported increasing the price of gas as part of a policy to reduce CO2 emissions to fight climate change.

So too have the three others who signed the letter. Senator Maria Cantwell (D., Wash.) proposed a "cap-and-dividend" bill that would have increased gas taxes by up to 21 cents per gallon. The letter was also signed by Senator Ed Markey (D.,

Mass.), whose name adorns the most aggressive climate legislation of the last decade, a bill that would have increased gas prices by [up to 63 cents per gallon](#), according to the Energy Information Administration.



The senators' letter laments the rise in oil prices as summer approaches, calling on the president to jawbone Saudi Arabia to cut prices and "put pressure on oil exporting nations." Ironically, the United [States may soon become](#) the world's leading oil-exporting nation.

Demanding that the president cut gas prices so families can use more fossil fuels demonstrates how cynically the Left uses environmental policy. The explicit goal of carbon taxes and cap-and-trade systems is to increase the price of gasoline, home heating, and electricity, providing an incentive for consumers to use less. Schumer and the others who signed the letter all support these policies, which would, in their words, have a significant impact "on our economy and family budgets."

In an effort to escape the obvious hypocrisy of their position, the four complain that increased expenditures on gas would go "to the OPEC cartel rather than the U.S. Treasury." This is revealing. If the Left supports higher energy prices only when the money goes to government, they don't really care about reducing CO2 emissions - they just want to increase taxes.

Today, the goal of attacking President Trump is far more important than any environmental goal. When it is politically useful to attack the president on climate change, they accuse him of destroying the planet. When the better line of attack is to lament the impact of high gas prices on families, some on the left kick aside their purported environmental principles in favor of politics.

This kind of environmental hypocrisy is not limited to the American Left. North of the border, the left-wing government of Ontario has taken this brand of hypocrisy to the next level. After imposing a carbon tax, the government prohibited utilities from listing the new tax separately on people's bills.

Again, the purpose of a carbon tax is to send a price signal. Hiding that price signal from consumers may be good politics - so they can blame others for high utility costs - but it completely undermines the purpose of the carbon tax. Politicians want to bask in the glow of environmental righteousness conferred by environmental groups who praise their commitment to saving the planet. They just don't want to pay a political price for it.

It gets worse. When high energy prices became politically unpopular, the Ontario government borrowed money to subsidize the reduction in energy prices. Politicians increased energy prices and then used taxpayer money to cut the energy prices they had raised.

It is increasingly clear that the Left's commitment to the environment is more a matter of politics than a sincere commitment to environmental stewardship. The government-heavy 1970s approach to environmental stewardship is unworkable and outdated. That insincere use of the environment by some of the Left makes conservatives reluctant to talk about the issue, fearing it is little more than a political weapon. But we should not let the Left's political cynicism destroy our sincere love of nature.

Senate Democrats complaining about high gas prices even as they push gas prices higher is just the latest manifestation of the Left's disingenuous environmentalism. It provides, however, an opportunity to contrast that cynicism with an honest conservative stewardship ethic that is both sincere and modern.

While the Left looks to force Americans to change our lifestyle, conservatives know the combination of technology and personal incentives are a powerful tool to use fewer resources even as we live better. The evidence is everywhere. Although the Prius has become a symbol of environmental consciousness, it was Toyota's recognition that people with disposable income would pay more for a fuel-efficient car that led to its creation. Subsidies came along later, but the market led the way.

Now the technology to help families do more with less is literally in the palm of our hand. Thermostats that connect to our phones and use artificial intelligence, like Nest, help keep our homes comfortable with less energy. Technologies that connect to our phones allow us to track our use of water (such as [Buoy](#)) and electricity (such as the [Sense](#) monitor I have in my home) and find ways to economize and conserve. Personal incentives, not government mandates, are driving environmental innovation.

Conservatives, who thrive in rural - and natural - America, have an opportunity to offer a 21st-century approach to protecting the environment. This approach must reflect a commitment to technology that sees consumer knowledge and empowerment, not restrictions, as the key to environmental stewardship.

*This piece originally appeared in National Review Online. It is reprinted with permission.*

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And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

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**From Ara's Journal**

## On Turning 60

I turned 60 last week.

There was no fanfare, no big party, no elaborate celebration. I didn't want any of that.



Instead, I spent the day alone, at the beach, reflecting on my past and on my future.

The way I see it, my life is comprised of 3-phases. First, there is what I call Youth. That runs for the first 30 years. Then, once I hit 30, I entered the beginning phase of what I call Middle Age, which takes up another 30 years. Now, at age 60, I enter the last phase of my life, which hopefully will take me to about age 90 if things go well.



So here are some of my reflections of the past:

My past is a mixture of some very fortunate experiences and some regrettable ones.

On the positive side, my health has been largely very good. I have been privileged to receive a first-rate education. I have been mentored by some very bright minds. I discovered God, Christ, His Church, the holy priesthood, and the reality of miracles, along with sacred works of holy writ that are not had by the world population generally. I formed deep friendships with men and women of all ages, all ethnicities, and all religious and political persuasions; these people dot the globe. I was able to purchase a spacious home and pay off the mortgage, thus experiencing the American Dream. I have found work that gives me meaning. I learned to appreciate the arts, particularly music, and to develop some experience with the guitar. I was able to travel, visiting some 43 countries. And I was able to get very clear on what matters to me, what my purpose is, what my mission is about.

On the negative side, I've wasted a lot of time, I've had some unhappy relationships, I have not always lived up to my lofty ideals, I have not always treated people with the kindness and respect they have deserved, I've tried too hard to be the center of attention and have said some foolish things, I have failed to have as lucrative a career as I was probably capable of, and I have, at times, failed to be serious-minded.

But I am heartened at the possibilities that lie ahead. I feel myself committing to utilizing my time better. I see myself not getting worked up as much, and mellowing a bit. I see myself as veering towards kindness, and helpfulness towards others who may benefit from that, yet at the same time, I see myself as withdrawing from my former tendencies to be front-and-center, preferring anonymity and seclusion. I see myself getting more, not less, sleep. I see myself making significant contributions through writing, publishing, etc. I see myself committing to a healthier lifestyle in terms of regular exercise, and proper food consumption. I see myself aging gracefully, as my eyes get a bit dimmer, and my pace becomes a bit slower, and my memory becomes a bit less keen.

This is what occupies my mind after turning 60.

And I am relishing each day that is allotted to me in this final, 30-year phase of my life.

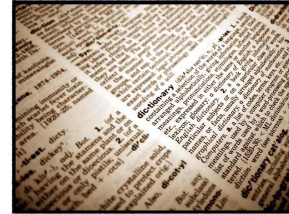
## The World of Words

### Rarefied

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Rarefied**, adj. (Alt. Spelling: Rarified)

**Pronunciation:** rərə'fīd



**Meaning:** When something is thought to be lofty, exalted, elevated, or otherwise high in stature and esteem, that thing could be said to be rarefied.

#### Usage:

- *He won't like that particular restaurant; he has rarefied tastes.*
- *I have always loved the rarefied atmosphere of a scholarly symposium.*
- *She is the most disciplined woman I've ever met, possessing a bevy of rarefied spiritual attainments and complete control of her passions.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email ([ara@aranorwood.com](mailto:ara@aranorwood.com)).

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