

Dear Bapu

Its with wry irony that I write this...

I am going for the non-fanciful, state-it-straight, approach that you adduced. Because, in my humble opinion, ***simplicity starts with thought*** - and how rude it would be for me to wax eloquent about how you inspire me.

A few years back, when shopping at one of the "swadeshi handlooms" shops of Mahatma Gandhi International Airport, it struck me that I could borrow some of your "quotes" to add punch to a presentation I was going to give a potential customer of my firm. I should state that I was in the employment, proudly, of an international firm that specialized in exploiting cost arbitrage.

I had the swagger, panache and the beguiling modesty, of our generation that dreamt of making it big. Bapu you should know that our idea of economics is shaped by an unrelenting focus on explosive, exclusionary growth - it is about out-competing others. I mean, Entire nations do it today.

Anyhow, as to that presentation, I picked up some of your popular quotes - "be the change you want to see"; "there is enough for everyone's need - not for their greed" and so on... But then, today, the line between need and greed has fuzzed up a bit. So, snuffing out that cringing feeling that derives from the last vestige of conscience, I dared to use your quotes..

On my way back, I had a chance to read up a bit on your thoughts. On village-centered economics, nai-talim (your ideas on learning), on the core of what a human should aim to become - viz to overcome our possessions and live simply in tune with nature, animal care and in general, your ideas on what tantamounts to growth.

Hell - everything about why/what/how we do things are precisely antithetical to what you propounded. It would be funny but for the dull fact of us having the dare to call you bapu while rubbishing everything you stood for. ***There are no conscience keepers today.***

Bapu, in the spirit of staying the line of truth, I state this: you are today, NOT the inspiration that has shaped our country.

But, for a few among the thinking ones, the mighty ideas you've willed us to do, is our guiding light in our march towards personal freedom. For, those are still timeless and the only ones worthy of human pursuit.

Warmly, Surendar.