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in internecine battles and self-promotion. Not only common citizens but their own followers are aghast at the appalling behaviour of our political class.

Bear in mind that our nation and our society are ancient. There have been times in our long history when our society fell prey to decadence. At such crucial junctures, the young generation invariably rose to the occasion and set the nation on the path of prosperity once more. The challenge is again upon our youth to shoulder the responsibility of steering our country's fortunes.

Regrettably, the system of education adopted even after Independence has gradually eroded the patriotic sentiments and social conscience of our youth. Even in well-educated families, youngsters are not motivated to shoulder social obligations. Our political leaders make poor role models; their lifestyles are a study in opportunism and self-indulgence. As a result, recipients of "modern" education don't spare a thought for society or country.

However, circumstances – if not the country's leadership – are teaching young people their moral obligations. The country's youth is writhing with dissatisfaction, confronted with the horror of rising unemployment and general human misery. They are looking for a new deal for the country, an alternative path to prosperity. Those young people who have come into contact with DRI like what they see. They have begun to realize that rural development, DRI's core mission, is the only way to improve the common man's lot. Small wonder that highly educated, newly married young people are keen to work in rural areas.

It was in rural India that our ancient and dynamic civilization and culture developed. Indeed, the concept of globalization first took shape here. Our ages-old unbroken traditions are so rich with timeless wisdom that even today, they can play a vital role in nation building.

At the time of Independence, we should have asked ourselves how our society had remained resilient and unchanged, even after centuries of slavery. How did our civilization and culture withstand the onslaught of successive foreign aggressors? How, at the worst of times and in the face of tremendous odds, did the drive for independence remain so intense? How did we regain