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My dear young friends,
Affectionate greetings.

From ancient times, India has nurtured a democratic way of life. Democratic traditions were not limited to administration alone, but were inherent in the social mores. The majority of the population was engaged in agriculture. The farmer, the annadatta (life-giver), was the pillar upon which these democratic structures rested. Even under foreign rule, he maintained his self-reliance.

Post-Independence, however, successive governments have eroded the self-reliance of our farmers, the guardians of democracy.

Western capitalism and Russian and Chinese communism are equally adverse to democracy. Yet Indian governments have swung like a pendulum between the two. Our rulers did not make any effort to understand the basis of our democracy.

Carried away by the mantra of industrialization, our governments found it necessary to mechanize agriculture as far as possible. Under the influence of wealthy farmers with large land-holdings, it tailored agricultural policy to suit their needs. These big farmers found mechanized agriculture more convenient and financially beneficial. Agricultural policy was dictated by them and Indian agriculture was rapidly mechanized.

With mechanization, the demand for fertilizers had to be met. Countries with a passion for industrialization ask for scientific reports before formulating policy. In order to enhance productivity, they subject farm-soil to chemical analysis. Thus, the demand for chemical fertilizers was created.

The effect of these chemical fertilizers on a field is a lot like the effect of alcohol on a human being. It feels good to begin with, but then becomes addictive and eventually destructive. Application of chemical fertilizers made crops vulnerable to a host of diseases. To deal with these diseases, chemical