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Book Review

Prasad, Anirudh (2016). *JP's Vision of Rural Reconstruction and Entrepreneurship Development*. Bihar Vidyapeeth, Patna. 40p. Price not mentioned.

This booklet was brought out to commemorate the 117th birth anniversary of Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as 'JP'. It contains five sections.

Section-I deals with 'JP's vision of Indian villages'. The author explores JP's vision of an ideal village. He says, "Like Gandhi, J.P. believed that the soul of India lay in the village. If the village suffered decay, the country as a whole would lose its identity. The villages had to be restored to their old glory rather than being treated as poor relations of the city" (p. 15).

Section-II covers 'The question of land and Bhoodan'. In February 1973, JP called upon the opposition parties, particularly the left opposition to cooperate with the Bihar government in implementing land reforms from the state to village level. He met Vinobha for the first time in 1951 and was at once drawn towards the Bhoodan movement. He tried to build bridges between government efforts in rural development and the Gramdan movement.

The subject of Section-III is 'Rural reconstruction in Sokhodeora Ashram'. It is a nerve centre of an exciting experiment. JP had realized that the Bhoodan movement should not be confined only to getting and distributing land among the poor. Agricultural and livestock development, village industries, educational programmes and promotion of self-dependence through entrepreneurship development had to be conducted with the help of local people trained for the purpose. He decided to launch his ideas of rural reconstruction in the field. The area selected was in the Kawakol police station in Gaya district. Gram Niram Mandal Khadi Gramodyog Samiti is one of the important and decentralized wings of the Gram Nirman Mandal Sarvodya Ashram, Sokhodeora. JP visited Kawakol around 1954. The area then was backward and full of forest. He thought that it would be the best place for experimenting development work on Gandhian lines and he started looking for a site for establishing an Ashram (centre) around Kawakol. The aims and objectives of these programmes were to help in the establishment of a stateless non-violent social order free from exploitation based on truth and non-violence to make village life happy, self-governed, free and self-sufficient, and to bring about such changes in the values of life of the people in which individual interest would be inspired by social interest and material desires by spiritual incentives.

In Section-IV the author talks about 'The Musahari interlude'. In the Musahari Block, the condition of people was miserable. They suffered from utter poverty, misery, inequality, exploitation, backwardness, stagnation and loss of hope. He wanted to try Gandhian methods for meeting the challenge. Through this voluntary process of individual and social change was initiated leading to community Self-Government or Gramswaraj. It involved attitudinal and value changes as well as changes in socio-economic and personal relations. However, he could not stay in Musahari beyond six months, as other national concerns claimed his attention from time to time. The Musahari experience led to his disillusionment with Gramdan work.

'Rural industrialization and entrepreneurship' are included in Section-V. He believed that considering all the factors of the Indian situation such as huge population, terrific rate of population growth, heavy pressure on land, low productivity of agriculture, vast unemployment and under employment, etc., industrialization of the rural area is the only remedy. The raw materials for rural industries may be obtained from the neighbourhood but in part they might also come from the cities such as iron and steel for agricultural and rural crafts. Rural industrialization would be able to transform the lopsided agricultural communities into balanced agro-industrial communities.

In short, these issues are covered in this small book. The contribution of JP to today's India was great and his vision of it needs to be remembered. Bihar Vidyapeeth has done well in organising the celebration of his birth anniversary and in choosing a well-known scholars to talk about his vision.

Manisha S. Shinde
Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.