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### The improvement of Indian cattle

There is probably no aspect of Indian agriculture which strikes even the casual observer more prominently and at the same time more painfully than the miserable condition of the cattle of the country, unless it be the thin emaciated form of the cultivator himself toiling patiently behind his equally patient team of oxen. And yet in no country is it more necessary that its cattle should be looked after better than in India, for as H.E. the Viceroy of India has observed in words that can never be forgotten 'the cow and the working bullock carry on their patient backs the whole structure of Indian agriculture'. The bullock supplies all the power on the farm, the ploughing, the raising of the water for irrigation, the threshing of the corn, and all the transport whether on the farm or on the roads; notwithstanding the new methods of motor transport the bullock cart still holds the field as the most important form of loco-

motion in the country, and even the pack bullock has not become altogether obsolete. The cow and the buffalo between them meet the whole of the requirements of milk and milk products of this vast country, hopelessly inadequate though they are, and cattle manure still forms the most important and generally the only source of manure. The money value of the cattle power alone has been computed to be between Rs 300 and Rs 400 crores, the milk and milk products at about Rs 300 crores and the manure at about Rs 270 crores, while the total value of the livestock of India inclusive of all the uses to which they are put is said to be of the order of Rs 1300 crores. The cattle population itself is immense, numbering about 200,000,000 head and forming roughly about one-third of the whole world's cattle population. Despite this prodigious number and the huge money value, India's cattle wealth is however a neglected and illdeveloped asset. The bullock power, large as it is, is poor and inefficient, and is contributed by small underfed and nondescript types of animals which lack the strength and stamina necessary for working even the small indigenous ploughs and other implements, and are out of the question for the better class of implements that can otherwise be advantageously introduced. Even in the tracts where a better class of animals is seen to predominate, insufficient feed lowers their value and vice of indiscriminate and uncontrolled breeding is bringing in progressive deterioration in the

qualities associated with the respective breeds. As is the case with the bullocks so is it with the cows of the country. The milk and milk products produced, vast as they are in quantity, are supplied by an immense number of cows and buffaloes whose low record of performance is a by-word in the country-side. Large as the quantity is, moreover, it is too insufficient for average needs, especially in a country like India, whose population is largely vegetarian and has a special need in respect of dairy products which supply the accessory food elements considered indispensable for normal health. This position has long been one of grave concern, and ameliorative measures have been, and are being, taken by the provinces and states both for arresting this process of deterioration and for bringing about positive improvements. . . .

It cannot be too strongly emphasised in conclusion that the greatest impetus to cattle improvement can come only by making it remunerative. Make the industry pay and the rest will follow automatically. The larger the custom and the higher the prices for our cattle, the greater the stimulus and the better will they be looked after. Nor need we fear that any large sale of cattle to foreign markets would endanger the permanent interests of the industry and that ryots will in view of immediate profits deplete their stocks.

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