

CHAPTER NINE

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The Renuka Ray Report rather plays down the importance of animal husbandry in schemes for tribal development on the grounds that the use of animal power in agriculture is a novelty for most of the people and that the sacrificial killing of cattle is not conducive to the promotion of animal husbandry. It is true that, in some places, cattle given to shifting cultivators when settled elsewhere, have been used for food, but if we take the overall picture of tribal India the number of tribals who still eat beef is today comparatively small. A large number of them, either as a result of propaganda by their neighbours or through a desire to rise in the social scale, which they feel will be effected by abstinence from this important article of diet, have abandoned the practice. It is also not entirely correct to say that most of the tribals are unaccustomed to the plough. Cattle are used for agriculture by them over vast areas of Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and elsewhere. Yet again, the animal husbandry programme is not concerned only with the care and upgrading of cattle. Other animals, such as pigs, goats, sheep, fowls and ducks play an important part in the tribal economy.

Even here there are in some places semi-religious movements, generally stimulated by the tribal people themselves, to bring to an end, for example, the eating of fowls; and the keeping of pigs is taboo to some, but not very large, tribal groups.

Yet, in the main, all these domestic animals are kept and used for food, and to improve the stock is one of those very practical and straightforward things which may bring great benefits and can do no possible harm.

In fact, since India is mainly an agricultural country animal husbandry has an important role in its life in general and for the tribal people in particular. The tribals reside mostly in the forest and hill areas when it is natural that animal life should be as important as human life. With the development of new scientific methods animal husbandry has a direct concern with daily life. Animals are utilised for the carriage of goods, and for ploughing and cultivating land. Well-irrigation is done through bullocks. Cattle not only serve as draught animals, but provide dung for manure and fuel. Recent scientific progress has even obtained gas from cowdung, which can be used for heating and cooking. Milching cattle give a fair share of milk. Hides and skins apart, bone-meal and other subsidiary industries in the form of leather factories have come into being. In most of the Block areas the cattle population exceeds the human population. If sufficient attention is paid to this aspect of tribal life, economic conditions can be greatly improved.

There is no need, however, to say very much about this subject, for most of the problems involved are technical—the provision of qualified staff, the purchase of animals and the supply of instruments. We may, however, briefly examine the matter under various heads.

Education :

Animal Husbandry, like Rural Housing, is primarily a matter of education. The tribal people generally are fond of animals; they like keeping

pets, and animals and human beings often live together in a single compound as one family. They do not, however, always look after their animals very well. The cattle-sheds and pig-sties are often badly constructed and are very dirty without proper floors. The people tend to overwork their cattle and are sometimes cruel to them. They do not pay nearly enough attention to feeding them and some scheme for developing fodder is very important.

Green grass is available during the monsoon season, when there is ample supply of water, but during the fair weather and summer when the streams and rivers go dry, there is a scarcity of water and there is nothing which can be used as fodder, leading to untimely deaths of cattle on a large scale. To supplement fodder during the dry season is essential, but no schemes for fodder preservation have yet been evolved. The tribals in general are not accustomed to stall-feeding of their cattle but proper training will make them take to this and it will do a lot to meet the shortage of fodder during the dry season. Dearth of fodder is further due to the fact that more and more land is being brought under cultivation of grain and money crops and naturally grass is grown over a smaller area, which is inadequate as compared to the number of cattle.

We recommend that all extension workers should be briefed to spread modern ideas about the housing and feeding of animals and the prevention of cruelty to them.

Upgrading of stock :

The cattle, pigs, goats and fowls kept by the tribals are usually very sturdy but rather small. To upgrade the stock will, therefore, be of very great value. But we feel that it should be done with caution. It has often happened that the introduction of such splendid cattle as Hariana, Sehibal, Tharparkar, Malvi, Kenkhatha or Gaolao are unsuitable just because they are a little too splendid. The same thing has happened for fowls and goats. It might be possible to obtain new animals which are of good breed but which are not too large.

Many of the new cows, pigs, goats and fowls, that have been taken into the more elevated and inaccessible areas, have died, partly because they have been unable to stand the unfamiliar climate, partly because they have not been properly looked after. Veterinary services should if possible precede any attempt to improve the local stock, for it is essential that these delicate and expensive V. I. P. animals should have every possible care. If animals have to be imported for breeding purposes to places of higher elevation they should be gradually acclimatized, just as mountaineers are acclimatized in two or more stages.

It is no use introducing animals for breeding without a survey of the local ideas on the subject. Attempts to improve poultry will not succeed among a tribe which has a taboo on the eating of fowls. There are sometimes similar taboos on the keeping of pigs and to many tribes that do keep pigs the colour is sometimes important; for example, some tribes like white pigs, others black. The introduction of Yorkshire pigs may be unsuccessful among a tribe which regards a white pig as unlucky.

Without providing a proper number of stud-bulls, the castration of the local bulls must be done with caution, for if it is done on a large scale without a simultaneous introduction of proper stud-bulls it will check the

growth of the cattle population and this will produce an adverse effect on the minds of the people.

Artificial Insemination :

In the hands of an expert this scheme can be a great success, as it has been in Narsampet. The main difficulty at the moment seems to be that of obtaining refrigerators and implements and the lack of communications which prevents sera and vaccine reaching the insemination centres in time. The attitude of the local people varies. Some of the tribes object to the practice and consider that it will bring bad luck on their animals. In some cases cows have died after being subjected to insemination and this has naturally had a discouraging effect on the tribal mind. Other tribes, however, have become enthusiastic about it after seeing how successful it can be.

We feel that some priority should be given to the tribal areas with regard to the distribution of refrigerators and implements which at present, of course, are in short supply and strictly controlled.

Veterinary Services :

All other schemes for improvement of the cattle wealth of the tribes will fail without energetic and efficient veterinary officers and it is essential that they should be provided with all the vaccines, sera, medicines and instruments that they require. Veterinary dispensaries and hospitals should not be opened in the Block Headquarters but should be placed in the interior, after a survey to establish the areas where there is the greatest concentration of cattle and other animals in tribal hands.

Fisheries :

Fisheries are of great importance, for practically all the tribal people like fish and enjoy fishing. Some of them have ceremonial fishing expeditions which are preceded and followed by religious rites. Fish are generally dried and stored against a rainy day. There are plenty of rivers, tanks, reservoirs, and the supply of fish, so important as domestic food as well as for sale wherever there are available markets, should be taken up much more seriously than at present.

General :

In some of the tribal Blocks the development of sheep-rearing is important. This is specially so in the higher and colder areas where a good income can be made by selling wool and there are possibilities of encouraging the valuable cottage industry of spinning and weaving it into cloth.

In general the veterinary coverage is inadequate. One Primary Centre and three Sub-Centres cannot deal with all the domestic animals of a Block. One Sub-Centre may have to serve about 50 square miles and has to deal with about 15,000 cattle on an average. Looking to the staff provided under the scheme, it is next to impossible to deal effectively with the cattle, milch as well as draught, as well as other animals, in the area. The number of Goshalas and Gosadars are also inadequate.

We have noticed that in some of the Blocks the non-tribals seem to get an exaggerated share of the animals and birds imported for breeding purposes. This is because it is difficult to take them into the real interior and the people living near the Block Headquarters, where all too often there is a large majority of non-tribals, get their claims in first. P.E.Os should watch

this carefully and ensure that the poorer people far away should get their full share of this important benefit.

We recommend as follows :

(1) In order to better the conditions and to develop milch and draught cattle, cattle-consciousness should be produced among the tribals by means of audio-visual units, exhibitions and propaganda.

(2) The incentive to improve the condition of their domestic animals should come from the tribals themselves and this can only be achieved if Government takes effective interest by spreading facilities in the Block areas by providing the outlying dispensaries with medicines, instruments, medical staff and creating a congenial and enthusiastic atmosphere.

(3) Facilities for educating men and boys in animal husbandry and veterinary training should be enlarged by including this subject in schools and colleges, or even by opening special schools. Local tribal boys should be given training as stockmen, veterinary compounders, and vaccinators-*cum*-compounders. This need not cost very much, yet it will surely go a long way in enriching the cattle population and developing poultry-farming, pigeons, pisciculture and so on with a beneficial effect on the general economic condition of the tribal areas.

(4) Officials employed in the Special Blocks should be mainly selected or recruited from the tribal areas themselves, for this will create a rural and tribal setting and there will be less need to draw trained veterinary personnel from the towns.

(5) The present practice of dealing with the diseases, castration of bulls and other so-called crude methods in treating the animals can only be changed by a proper atmosphere and the introduction of educational facilities by Government.

(6) It is important to develop Co-operatives to handle and market dairy products, fish, eggs and so on and to provide them with working capital.