Relational Analysis of Humans and Animals in Colonial India

Intro to History Assignment 2
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Introduction

Ever since prehistoric humans, our species has always been inclined to live together in groups and form tribes in order to have shared resources and shared protection. In comparison to the other animals in the wild, the human, even though extremely intelligent, is also extremely weak and if there were any encounters between any of these strong animals and a singular human, it is unlikely that the human will come out of that fight alive. It is common for animals to trespass over human territory and vice versa, which leads to conflict between the animals. Tribes counter this by hunting any potential animals that could harm any members of the tribe.

Unlike today, where most humans live in cities which are concrete jungles and it is unlikely to have any encounter with a dangerous and ferocious animal like a tiger here, during the British Raj, most of the native Indians lived in small groups in rural areas and in villages which were always surrounded by wilderness. This means that the villagers were always at risk of having their territory be trespassed on by a potentially dangerous animal. This report analyses the region-wise data from categories and uses them to analyse the distribution of animals in the country, the distribution of deaths and subsequently, the frequency of hunting of animals in various regions.

Analysis

We know from various historical texts that during the British Raj of Colonial India, the British had taken up the responsibility of the hunting of animals. This served a dual purpose. Hunting was a pristine activity, a rich hobby even, that requires a lot of skill and patience, which garnered a lot of praise if the animal was hunted, and ofcourse it would also keep the native Indians safer in the process. It was done both as a service to the Indians to reinforce the colonial states claims and as a leisure activity. Once they had killed the animal, it was customary to stand next to the corpse of the animal and take a photo of it while holding their rifle, taking the animal using its skin to decorate their living quarters and palaces. Animals also made travelling from region to region difficult at times, as the routes would usually cut straight through the forest and sometimes attack the passengers and their vehicles. This meant that the animals could pose a threat not

only to village dwellers, but also to Britishers who were travelling across the country. In the story "The Temple Tiger", we see the Jim Corbett is hunting the man-eating tiger, but his main motive for hunting down the beast is not so that it would stop terrorizing and mutilating the nearby villagers, his main motive was to kill it for sport, to satisfy his inner desires to hunt the beast so that he would boast about it. There was a very clear and direct attempt by the Britishers to impose their superiority on the local Indians through this act of hunting as it was portrayed as a very brave and selfless act, when in fact it was a selfish hunger for hunting that Jim Corbett was out to quench.

Upon plotting graphs on the data that was provided, we observe that in most regions, per year the total number of deaths of humans due to animals was in the hundreds, for some animals even in the thousands and tens of thousands. In every region, we see that a majority of the deaths of humans are caused by snakes. From this observation, we can say that in Colonial India, medicine had still not progressed quite much and the skilled doctors were deserved for the British, leaving the Indians with little to no medical assistance, leading to many people losing their lives due to venomous snakes.

The loss is not just of human life, but cattle as well. Farming and Poultry were one of the main sources of income during the British Raj for the local Indians, and losing their livestock to an attack by an animal was a loss that the farmer or caretaker would have to bear. From the data, we can see that in most regions, wolf and tigers are the main reason for cattle being killed. This can also be understood from the fact that most cattle that are raised are cows, sheep and chickens, which are the primary prey for tigers and wolves.

To counter this, the Britishers had employed hunters and placed bounties and rewards for killing these animals and bring it back to them. Intuitively we can say that more the reward that is provided to kill a particular animal, the more incentive people have to take the risk to hunt that animal, but we can see the rewards that are being provided for each kill is quite less. This is probably due to the fact that . In regions like the Central Provinces, Burma and Bombay, we see an increased hunting of snakes as these are also the regions where the majority of human deaths were caused by snakes. In all regions, the snakes will kill the most, owing to their abundance in the forests.

In the graphs, we do see a stark difference between the number of attacks by animals on humans and cattle, and the number of animals being hunted in the province. Ofcourse, these animals were mostly hunted to reduce the danger of being attacked by them, but from the data combined with the knowledge of the notion that at the time Britishers enjoyed killing these animals for sport, we can infer that animals that are regarded as "ferocious" and "scary" were hunted a lot more than other animals. In states like Ajmere, Assam, Berar, Bombay, Madras and Oudh, we can see that Wild Beasts and wolves are hunted quite a lot more as compared to other animals in the regions. Similarly we can see that in the state of Burma and Central Provinces the reward that was being given for

killing leopards was a lot more as compared to the number of deaths caused by leopards. This is most probably because the leopard's hide is an extremely sought after commodity which people wanted to acquire.

We can also infer from the graphs that the British placed bounties on the animals in different regions based on the population density, or rather the scarcity of the animal in that region. We can see the bounty placed on the leopard is much higher in the Central Provinces as compared to Madras. This is because Madras had more leopards in the region, which subsequently led to more deaths due to leopards. If the British were to place a high bounty on leopards in this region, then a lot of people would be to kill them and claim the prize, resulting in huge losses for them. This meant that they had accordingly placed the bounty, and the data reflects this pattern. In any region where the scarcity of a particular creature is higher, the bounty on that animal also gets increased.