

Greetings Iloved Ras.

With due respect to the I's good intentions, from all that I have read and studied it would be a mockery to compare Indian indentureship to African chattel slavery in the Caribbean.

Firstly, Indians were allowed to retain: their family (Africans had theirs split up); their language (Africans had the use of theirs forbidden); their religion (Africans had theirs banned); their music (Africans had the drum - representing the voice of their gods - banned by laws, some of which remain on the statute book in Barbados to this day). This highlights the all-important difference between indentureship and slavery: The heart of slavery was not the horrible labour conditions. If that were so, slavery and indentureship might be comparable. The heart of slavery was the stealing of the African's soul - his language (the eyes through which one sees the world), his gods, his family, his musical sounds. That is why some 169 years after Emancipation, many Africans in the Caribbean remain enslaved. Some say enslaved mentally (in distinction to physical slavery), but this is misleading. SLAVERY IS MENTAL. Captivity is physical. Why the Africans have taken longer to restore their race - as opposed to Indians, Jews and other ethnic groups that suffered at the hands of White Supremacy - is because no other people were ever subjected to what the Africans suffered. If you capture a people and reduce them to harsh, brutal conditions of exploitation, once they survive, when that is brought to an end the people will soon rehabilitate themselves. But when you take away a people's tongue, their connection to the ancestors, their gods; when you smash their family life so that the male loses respect for the female and vice versa; when you teach them to hate their skin, their lips, their hair, so that they hate anyone that looks like them - then you will have destroyed the culture and soul of that people and recovery will be almost like a resurrection. That is why it has taken Rastafari, Vodun, Orisha and the other spiritual potencies to awaken and heal the descendants of the African slaves.

Secondly, millions of Africans died on the dreadful crossing from Africa. How many Indians perished on their way here? The Trans-Atlantic trade in captive Africans and African chattel slavery lasted roughly from 1473 to the 1880s - some four centuries. Indian indentureship lasted from the 1840s until when - the end of the 19th century?

Thirdly, the trade in African captives depleted the African homeland tremendously. Consequently, up to this day, in contrast to the huge populations of India and China, the African continent is badly underpopulated. In fact, it has been estimated that even if all the Black

people returned tomorrow to Africa, it still would not be fully populated. Walter Rodney in HOW EUROPE UNDERDEVELOPED AFRICA provides some statistics

to give an idea of the devastating effect that the trade in Africans had on Africa for four centuries. Whole towns and villages were wiped out. Ethnic groups disappeared. Others were driven to war on their neighbours or face the prospect of having their own group captured and shipped to the 'New World'. The natural line and trajectory of material and spiritual development for millennia in Africa's history up to the time of the Trans-Atlantic Trade in captive African was interrupted, disrupted and corrupted. While it is true that India suffered horribly as a result of the British penetration of India during the period of indentureship, history attests that neither the scale nor the time period of this penetration can match the reality of the impact of the Slave Trade and Slavery on Africans and their Motherland.

But while the enslaved Africans - unlike the indentured Indians - had their ancestral cloak ripped from them, the White man could not take the living nucleus of their culture and its memory from them. So (as they say 'whoever loses his life shall gain it') they took this breath of their culture and created the living soul of Africa in the Caribbean - they recreated their musical forms, they reconceived their ancient gods through new prisms (like Judaeo-Christianity, for example in Haitian Vodun and Rastafari), they revived their sense of an organic connection to the earth, they rediscovered the taste of their traditional cuisine, and so on. And that is why we find that almost all that is distinctive about indigenous Caribbean culture owes its inspiration, its image and likeness, to Africa. It is also probably why there is no enduring large-scale mass Back to India or Back to China movements coming out of the Caribbean. In a sense, Mother India and Mother China were not taken away from their indentured children in the Caribbean since they continued to wear their traditional dress, listen to their traditional music, speak their traditional language and worship their traditional gods.

When the true history of the last 5 centuries of the recently past millennium is finally placed in proper perspective, the incomparable tragedy of the African people during the era of the slave trade and slavery will come fully to light. It is without precedent in human history.

I close by suggesting that the Indian people - who are essentially of African origin as Rashidi has documented - have a secure place in Rastafari, and as the Mansinghs have shown in their research, they have made a valuable contribution to the development of the Rastafari way of life.

Heartically.
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