Migrations and Encounters

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Author Note

The Transatlantic Trade

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From the mid-fifteenth century, there was a dependency of Africa and Europe on each other that resulted in the severe demographic losses of the Africans, while contributing economically to the Europeans. This practice of trade continues until the end of the nineteenth century. This trading would go down in the history books as the "Transatlantic Slave Trade Network". As the name suggests, the Africans were caught like games and transported across the Atlantic Ocean as cattle. The conditions of their travel were so poor that one in every five Africans did not even make it to the New World.

The exact dates when the slave trade in Africa took off are not known precisely. But many historians agree that this trade was responsible for the trading of almost thirteen million slaves across both continents. Out of these slaves, almost half were taken from the regions surrounding the Sahara Desert. There was a gradual dip in the rates of slaves traded in the eighteenth century before the rate of trade of slaves increased again in the nineteenth century. This is a significant deal for the Africans as according to certain population estimates, they numbered to about thirty-three thousand during the sixteenth century to slightly above ninety thousand at the end of the twentieth century, which is the lowest population growth anywhere in the world (Maddison, 2000). This exhibits a growth rate of around 10%, which could have been a lot higher if the demographics of Africa were not disturbed after removing a larger number of male Africans from their homes for working in plantations in Brazil, the Caribbean, and the American Colonies.

There is also another thing that must be noted here. The transatlantic slave trade was not the only network of trade that operated out of Africa. Enslaved Africa was also traded by Muslims across the Saharan Desert, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean (Campbell, 2003). The Islamic Slave Trade Network is older as compared to the European Slave Trade Network. There are many differences in the former one as well. For one, this network was not as extensive as the European one and most of the routes were land-based. Another difference is that Muslims often ended up giving slaves many positions of power. There was a slave called Ibrahim Pasha that ended up as the chief advisor to Suleiman the Magnificent, king of the Ottomans.

There are certain generalizations as well when it comes to the transatlantic slave trade. For one, it is believed that all the slaves were used in plantations. But that is not the case. Some of the slaves were even used as sailors as the Europeans moved their cargo across the ocean. Another generalization is that the slaves were treated horribly in the colonies. That is also not true to some extent as many owners took good care of their slaves as their children were also regarded as their property. This way they did not have to buy new slaves from Africa.

Only London and all the power centers of Europe gained advantage from this practice. In London, for example, there was a population boom due to the availability of goods and wealth that were supplied from the colonies of America, India, and Africa. This was the most important turnover in the fortunes of the city since the outbreak of the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London.

This boom in population also became a curse for the Londoners. As their population increased to over two million people, the living conditions for the people became unsanitary. There was an outbreak of cholera and other diseases due to unplanned hovels around the city due to affluence that the colonies and the slave trade had given them. Several historians think that these boons were the only thing that the sudden wealth gave to the inhabitants of London. This is not all true. London was the capital city of the Empire that owned one-fifth of the territory of the entire world (Rabin, 2012). The city was stable due to the wealth that the colonies had brought them and there was a political continuity that was not threatened before the start of the Great War.

# References

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