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# UNIT 1 CONCEPTS OF MIGRATION AND DIASPORA

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## 1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Engage with the theories and discourses on migration and diaspora
- Read some of the most current scholarships on these two subjects
- discusses the concepts of Migration and Diaspora in a theoretical framework.

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## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, we give an overview of what is international migration, what are the various theories to understand the concept and dynamics of international migration and finally how does it relate to the formation of diaspora. In other words, this unit, apart from understanding migration also discusses the interlinkages between migration and diaspora and the concept of diaspora. As we all know migration is not a new phenomenon, rather it is as old as the human civilization itself. People used to migrate from one place to another or from one continent to another even before the birth of "nation-states". International migration relates to the movement of people across national borders. This phenomenon has not only gathered momentum in the modern world but has also become stabilized owing to transnational connectivity. The trans-nationalisation of connections, networks, and identities lead to the formation of diasporas. Although it is difficult to come out with a specific definition, broadly speaking, the diasporas are long term settlers who continue to have socio-cultural, economic, and sometimes political links with the homeland while at the same time being part of the socio-cultural, economic, and political lives of the host land.

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## 1.3 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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Migration, in simple words, can be understood as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence by an individual, family or group. Migration is a broad term; we can even say that human history is the history of migration. Migration can be caused by various factors like better economic opportunities, better lifestyle, better educational opportunities, demographic imbalance, family reunification, natural calamities, climatic change, the spread of epidemics, wars, change in the national boundaries, genocide, religious and social ostracization, etc. The point which we are trying to make here is that people migrate due to different reasons and circumstances. Migration can also be of various types such as voluntary or involuntary/forced, internal or international, temporary, or permanent, and regular or irregular migration. Demko, Ross and Schnell describe migration as ‘the most complex component of population change. It provides an important network for the diffusion of ideas and information and indicates symptoms of social and economic change and can be regarded as a human adjustment to economic, environmental, and social problems (1970: 286-287).

Although migration has been happening since the beginning of human history, modern times have been termed as the “Age of Migration” (Castles and Miller 1993, 2009) owing to an enormous increase in international migration. As per United Nations Population Division, international migrants have increased from 105 million in 1985 to 214 million in 2010. It is little more than 3 per cent of the world population. This number however is not fully correct as a lot of people migrate 'illegally' and are not documented. Also, the criteria for defining who is a migrant vary from country to country. In some cases, citizenship can convert the migrants into citizens, and in other cases, even the 'second generations can remain classified as non-citizens.

Migration is an interdisciplinary subject, and each discipline tends to bring its own analysis according to its own academic needs. There has been an epistemological shift from quantitative understandings of population geography to the qualitative reading of anthropological interpretations. This understanding is not about the causes or the effects of migration but more about the understanding of the migrant experiences. According to Castles, “migration is a part of the process of transformation of social structures and institutions, and the entire global political economy”. Castles further explains that “migration studies needs to be embedded in broader social theory, drawing on the full repertoire of social science disciplines and that migration embraces all dimensions of human experience, and therefore demands an interdisciplinary approach” (2010: 1596). Sociologist Everett Lee observed that the factors which influence the decision of an emigrant can be divided as those operating in the area of origin (push factors), at the destination (pull factors). At the micro-level, migration is the result of decisions made by an individual, the ‘rational actors’.

International migration occurs when people cross state boundaries and stay in the host state for a minimum time. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) describes international migration as the ‘movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or the country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country. An international frontier is therefore crossed (2004:33). Some scholars like Fabio Baggio (2016) have given a descriptive classification of migrants. For example, Geographical

classification (which includes transoceanic, transcontinental, border migrations, neighbour migration and regional migration); Chronological classification which includes migrants based on time period like the short term and long term/ temporary or permanent migrations); Demographic/Economic classification (which includes categories like individual, family, male-female, highly skilled, skilled migrants etc.); Political and Legal classification (which includes migrants under regular or illegal migrations); Casual classification (which include free, or forced migrations) (Baggio 2016: 1-5). United Nations (UN) fixes two basic features of international migration which are “the international migrant stock and international migration flow.” While the stock means “a measure of the number of international migrants at a given point of time”, flow means “number of persons arriving in (inflows) or departing from (outflows) a given country or region over the course of a specified time period, usually a calendar year”. UN asserts that “both measures are necessary to assess migration trends and provide complementary insights for policy purposes”. (2020:5)

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## 1.4 THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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International migration studies have evolved over the years and no single theory can explain the rise and spread of international migration. The phenomenon has been explained by various social scientists like sociologists, social anthropologists, demographers, economists, geographers, and by developing and applying their own tools and levels of analysis.

### Neoclassical Theory

The theory of neoclassical economics, explains international migration from a macro-level perspective of geographic differences in the supply and demand of labour (Todaro and Maruszko, 1987, Massey et al. 1998:18). A country or a region which has a large presence of labour relative to the availability of capital will have excess supply of labour and low wages.

On the other hand, a country or a region which has a large capital relative to the presence of labour, will have labour scarcity and as a result High wages. As a consequence, the differential in wages induces the labour from labour-surplus low-wage countries to move to labour-scarce high-wage countries. Neoclassical theory, therefore, implies that the labour market mechanisms are the direct and sole factors influencing the decision of the individual to migrate; and other factors do not have much of effect on international migration.

International migration has been seen by Sjaastad (1962) as investment in human capital, which means that people move to places that provides them a better future prospects. Migration on the other hand comes at a cost. In order to earn higher wages some investments must be made. The expense of travel, the cost of living while looking for work, the effort required to learn another language and adjusting to a different culture, and the psychological costs of leaving friends and family behind and meeting new people are all examples of such costs (Sjaastad, 1962 in; Massey et al. 1998:19).

As a result, the theory assumes that pay and employment differentials across countries are the primary motivators for people to migrate. Migration will come

to a halt once such disparities are eliminated. A rational person makes the decision to migrate, and the migration destination is chosen based on the projected cost-benefit analysis. Critics argue that this strategy just reduces migrants to labour force and ignores gender, ethnicity, and social class categorisation (Cadwaller, 1992:10, in Goss and Lindquist, 1995:320). Furthermore, mobility barriers such as political or structural barriers are not considered (Goss and Lindquist, 1995:320).

### **The New Economics of Migration**

The New Economics of Migration method emerged in the 1980s and has provided some new insights into the migration process. This integrated approach was created to connect different levels of social structure while also taking into account historical and contemporary activities (Fawcett and Arnold, 1987:456; Massey, 1990, in Goss and Lindquist, 1995:326). Individual rationality and macroeconomic conditions are no longer considered as the sole factors influencing decision-making. Instead, the new migration economics highlights the significance of bigger groups of individuals, such as families, homes, or even communities, as the link between macro- and micro-level analyses. The model posits that people's collective goals are to maximise expected income while minimising risks associated with all types of market failures, not only labour market failures.

Economic improvement in sending nations may not mean the end of migration; on the contrary, it may increase the strain on migrants. A rise in the return on local productivity may make migration more appealing as a means of overcoming capital and risk restrictions. Regardless of whether pay differentials exist or not, the model predicts that migration will persist if other, above-mentioned markets within the sending nations are imperfect, nonexistent, or in disequilibrium. Furthermore, households in communities with varying income distributions may be motivated differently by the same predicted gain.

The notion of a unitary strategic actor is a major point of contention for critics of this paradigm. It has been pointed out, particularly by feminists, that household members do not always share the same aims and priorities.

### **Segmented Labour Market Theory**

The core idea of this economic theory is that international migration is a result of modern industrial societies' underlying labour demands. According to Piore (1979), migration is caused by pull forces in the destination country rather than push factors in the source country. He claims that industrialised countries' economic arrangements are to blame for the constant desire for foreign employees. According to this hypothesis, the receiving country's labour market, as well as all employers and governments working on its behalf, is the primary driver of international migration. According to Piore (1979), international migration is driven by demand, and pay disparities and inadequate insurance do not have a significant impact on migration.

### **Historical-Structural Theory and World Systems Theory**

International migration, according to the theory, is a natural result of capitalist market creation in emerging countries, and the penetration of the global

economy into peripheral regions serves as a stimulant for international movement. International migration, according to historical structuralism and world system theory, has little to do with income or employment differentials across countries; rather, it stems from the dynamics of market development and the global economy's political structure (Wallerstein 2004).

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## 1.5 THE PERPETUATION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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### Social Capital Theory

According to this theory, migrant networks play a critical role in the perpetuation of international movement and serve as a sort of social capital that makes migration simpler for everyone. Those networks, according to Palloni (et al. ), are interpersonal links that link migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination places through ties of family, kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin (Palloni et.al. 2001).

When people's relationships alter in ways that make it easier to act, social capital is said to be created. As a result, the benefits of migrating are limited due to everyday ties to family and community. When one user in a personal network migrates, however, this changes. These links are then turned into a resource that a potential migrant can use to acquire access to abroad work and lower the overall cost of relocation. Every act of migration generates social capital for all non-migrants, increasing their chances of migrating as a result. As a result, social networks in the nation of origin can develop into migrant networks that connect the home country with the host country, minimising the costs of migration for a migrant in that network. For the first migrant who travels to a new nation without any social ties, migration is costly. Then, after chain migration has developed, migrant networks lower movement costs.

According to this concept, international migration expands over time until network connections have spread broadly enough in a sending region that all people who want to travel can do so without difficulty; after that, migration slows. Furthermore, according to the hypothesis, the amount of a country's migratory movement is not directly tied to pay differentials or employment rates. The declining costs and dangers of travel resulting from the increase of migrant networks over time appear to outweigh these considerations. Furthermore, when international migration becomes more institutionalised through the establishment and elaboration of networks, it becomes less dependent on the circumstances that first triggered it. However, as networks grow larger, they may become more selective and competitive, which means that joining a migrant network does not guarantee that you will be able to migrate (Goss and Lindquist 1995).

### Cumulative Causation

This hypothesis explains how migration starts and progresses. According to the model, international migration tends to sustain itself over time in ways that gradually raise the possibility of additional movement (Massey 1999; Fussell & Massey 2004). Causation is cumulative in the sense that each act of migration changes the social context in which subsequent migration decisions are made,



usually in ways that increase the likelihood of further movement. Because the feedback mechanisms of cumulative causation are largely outside the reach of government, the social, economic, and cultural changes brought about by international migration in sending and receiving countries give the movement of people a powerful impetus resistant to easy control or regulation. The premise of this strategy is that the cumulative influence of individual decisions can alter the context in which a migration decision is made over time.

### **The Human Agency Approach in International Labour Migration**

The scientific literature on labour migration, particularly in the Gulf countries, tends to see the phenomenon as purely structural, with human beings appearing only as stock or labour force. The push and pull elements of the economy or demographics are the major actors in these assessments. Politics, government ideologies, and various types of markets are examples of central actors on the micro and macro levels. As a result, the social anthropological Longva (1997) proposes a human agency perspective to international labour migration that stresses the person. The reasons why people choose to relocate, stay, stay abroad, or return home demand their own inquiry and understanding. According to Longva (1997) and Suter (2005), not only structural incentives and impediments account for these events, but also the definition of the limit beyond which deprivation becomes intolerable and thus necessitates drastic measures such as migration, as well as the definition of what is good, or worse, necessary, or impossible. to put up within the host country, are decided by human beings who appraise their own circumstances and not by the abstract.

#### **Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Explain Neoclassical Theory of Migration

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- 2) Explain the economic aspect of migration.

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- 3) What is Cumulative Causation?

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## **1.6 THE CONCEPT OF DIASPORA**

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As mentioned in the earlier section, diaspora is a concept that is closely related to international migration. Nevertheless, it is not a new concept. The term

diaspora has a Greek origin, implying 'scattering' or 'dispersion'. The term first came in usage in the context of the Jews. The Jewish experience remained the paradigm for a very long time and was marked by the destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of Jews to other areas especially Babylon with a sense of 'captivity, exile, alienation and isolation.' It added a shade of victimization and negativity in the whole sense of the word (Pande 2013). In the postmodern world, however, the concept was radically reordered in response to the growing transnationalism. Globalization and transnationalism has 'led to the technological revolution in telecommunications and information technology, and has created conditions for increased cross-border communication and exchange, and, therefore, laid the basis for an expansion of economic transactions among states on a global scale' (Hall and Benn, 2000: 24). For growing numbers of migrants, the significant contacts and emotional connections that occur across borders turn the identity into transnational. The economic engagements and formal citizenship practices that have evolved in recent decades make the transnational engagement more dynamic and substantial.

Thus, the concept and the term diaspora have travelled far from their origin. William Safran made the first significant step in the direction of defining or conceptualizing the term Diaspora. However, as each diasporic formation is different, Safran substantially relaxed his definition by stating that no contemporary diaspora will meet all the criteria but will share several of the following features (See the box). Cohen (1995) adopts Safran's definition but added four additional features; "diaspora should also include scattering groups with aggressive or voluntary purposes; should possess a strong with the past that acts as a block to assimilation; diasporas should be defined positively rather than negatively; people of the diaspora have also a common identity with co-ethnic members in other countries such as colonial settlers, overseas students, refugees, and economic migrants." Cohen also divides the diaspora studies into four following phases.

The first phase: 'the classical use of the term, relates to the study of the Jewish experience'.

The second phase: 'From 1970- to the 80s when the classical meaning was extended, to common Africans, Armenians and the Irish'.

The third phase: From the mid-1990s, 'was marked by new ways of studying diasporas by doing away with the social constructivist demarcation of the diasporic idea, into 'homeland' and 'ethnic/religious community'.

The fourth phase: 'Of consolidation, is marked by a modified reaffirmation of the diasporic idea, including its core elements, common features, and ideal types'.

According to Adamson (2007), a "diaspora can be identified as a social collectivity that exists across state borders and has succeeded over time to: (i) sustain a collective national, cultural, or religious identity through a sense of internal cohesion and sustained ties with a real or imagined homeland, and (ii) display an ability to address the common interests of members of the social collective through a developed internal organizational framework and transnational links" (2007:497).

Different types of diasporas:

Cohen identifies five types of Diasporas

No	Types of Diasporas	Examples
1	Victim/Refugee	Jews, African, Armenian, Irish and Palestinian
2	Imperial/Colonial	Ancient Greek, British, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch
3	Labour/Service	Indentures Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Turk
4	Trade/Business/Professional	Lebanese, Chinese, Some Indian communities
5	Cultural/Hybrid/Postmodern	Caribbean and Today's Chinese and Indian

Source: Cohen (1997:178)

Though, the meaning and form of diaspora is changing over time. There is no clear-cut distinction for many diasporas as the same diaspora broadly can come under different categories. For example, some of the Indian diasporas can be traders, professionals, and labour. The same is with the Chinese diasporas. In 2004 Michele Reis also came out with his explanation of 'diaspora' formation through phases. He describes three critical historical phases, (i) the classical period with Ancient Greek, Jewish and Armenian diasporas; (ii) Modern Period, which relates to the historical fact of slavery and colonization. This phase can be further divided into three phases: (a) the expansion of European capital (1500-1814), (b) the Industrial Revolution (1815-1914), and (c) the Interwar Period (1914-1945); (iii) the third phase is the Contemporary or Late-modern period of immediately after World War II to the present day. This phase is most important for understanding the modern diasporas (2004: 44-49).

Safran is criticised by James Clifford (1994). He claims that the Jewish diaspora lacks his last three characteristics. Diasporas, he believes, should have boundaries. They should be defined in light of national-state norms and tribal people's indigenous claims.

Brubaker addresses the term diaspora's expansion, as well as the dispersion of its connotations in semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary space (Brubaker, 2005). According to him there should be criteria for defining diaspora. To avoid becoming confused in the flowering of Diasporas, these characteristics include dispersion, homeland orientation, and border maintenance.

Lastly, according to A. Pande (2013) the core elements that can be treated as the starting point for the description of the diaspora can be underlined as the following:

- (1) Cross-border Migration/Dispersion and Settlement: It implies a dispersion in which the territorial boundaries of the state are crossed, followed by settlement in the "new land". This cross-border movement should lead to a



permanent or, at least, long-term settlement in the host country.

- (2) **Host Land Participation:** Settlement in the new land signifies not only residence but participation in the economic and political processes of the host land.
- (3) **Homeland Consciousness:** It implies a sense of awareness about the existence of a motherland (sometimes a non-existent one) or a profound engagement with the homeland which exists beyond the borders of the country of settlement.
- (4) **Construction of a Multi-locational 'Self':** It involves the recreation of identity, drawing from both home and host lands and is not marked by strict boundaries. Such an identity is distinct, yet has points of the merger at both ends, and undergoes changes as generations pass by. Both host land/homeland dynamics play a crucial role in the formation of such identities.

In contemporary times the diasporic formations are complex and the reason for their formation, is manifold. Diasporic identities have become deterritorialized. Michel Laguerre (1999: 641) remark that ‘the nation has outgrown the state because of its diasporic tentacles’. Diasporic identities are constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way. Hence, ‘defining the term or coming out with an 'ideal type' is often confronted with the problem of applicability. To treat diasporas as a homogenous term would be unfair as each case is markedly different from the other’ (Pande 2013). However, what needs to be highlighted here is that every act of migration does not necessarily lead to diasporic formation. Cohen (1995:516) has highlighted that ' time has to pass before the migrant community can be called a diaspora.

**Safran’s main characteristics of a diaspora:**

- a) “They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original ‘centre’ to two or more foreign regions.
- b) they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history, and achievements.
- c) they believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
- d) their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they or their descendants should return;
- e) they believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and its safety and prosperity, and
- f) they continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.”

Source: Safran, W. (1991). Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora: A journal of transnational studies*, 1(1), 83-99.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 4) Explain Safran's idea that diaspora is 'a metaphoric designation' and his six characteristics of diaspora.

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5) Explain the different types of diasporas.

6) Explain the different phases of diaspora.

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## 1.7 LET US SUM UP

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If there is no migration, there is no question of the formation of Diaspora. However, not all migrant communities can be termed as diaspora. As various theories mention, it is the permanent or settled migration in another country having social, cultural, emotional links with the mother country that qualifies a community as a diaspora. However, there are also various types, diversities, and complexities in the formation of diaspora as well as their relationships with home and host countries.

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## 1.8 KEYWORDS

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**Immigration:** is the action by which a person or a non-national move into a country for the purpose of settlement or short-term visit. (IOM 2020)

**Emigration:** The act of departing or exiting from one State with a view to settling in another. International human rights norms provide that all persons should be free to leave any country (IOM 2020)

**Asylum seeker:** Persons seeking to be admitted into a country as refugees and awaiting a decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. (IOM 2020)

**Migrant:** An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.

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## 1.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check your progress 1

1. According to neoclassical economic theory, on a macro level, geographic inequalities in labour supply and demand generate international migration. (Todaro and Maruszko, 1987, Massey et al. 1998:18). A country with a large labour endowment compared to capital will have low wages and a labour surplus, whereas a country with a large capital endowment compared to labour will have high wages and labour scarcity.
2. There are a number of theories that explain the economic aspects of migration. According to neoclassical economic theory, on a macro level, geographic inequalities in labour supply and demand generate international migration. A country with a large labour endowment compared to capital will have low wages and a labour surplus, whereas a country with a large capital endowment compared to labour will have high wages and labour scarcity. Workers from low-wage or labor-surplus countries are compelled to migrate to high-wage or labor-scarce countries as a result of the wage disparity.

In the 1980s, the Fresh Economics of Migration approach was developed, and it has provided some new insights into migration. The new migration economics model stresses the significance of bigger groups of linked people, such as families, households, or even communities, in bridging the macro- and micro-levels of research. Furthermore, the model posits that people seek to maximise projected earnings while minimising risks associated with all types of market failures, not only those in the labour market. Segmented labour market theory states that international migration stems from the underlying labour demands of modern industrial societies.

3. According to this model, international migration tends to sustain itself over time in ways that gradually raise the possibility of further mobility. Causation is cumulative in the sense that each act of migration changes the social context in which subsequent migration decisions are made, usually in ways that increase the likelihood of further movement.

### Check your progress 2

4. Explain Safran's idea that diaspora is 'a metaphoric designation' and his six characteristics of diaspora.

Safran notably argued, “diaspora was deployed as ‘a metaphoric designation’ to describe different categories of people – ‘expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*’.” His six characteristics are the following:

- “They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original ‘centre’ to two or more foreign regions;
- they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
- they believe they are not – and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
- their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they or their descendants should return;
- they believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and its safety and prosperity; and
- they continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.”

5. Explain different types of diasporas.

Different types of diasporas are:

- a) Jewish diaspora starts with the Babylonian Exile and the Jewish community living in Israel. But in broader terms, the term refers to ‘the physical dispersal of Jews throughout the world, it also carries religious, philosophical, political, and eschatological connotations, since the Jews perceive a special relationship between the land of Israel and themselves.’
- b) Victim diaspora- Cohen identifies the Jewish, Irish, Palestinian, African, and Armenian diasporas, which can be labelled with the preceding adjective of ‘victim’ through self-description or construction by others. These groups live in other places due to fear, threat or dispute at their original place.
- c) Labour and imperial diaspora- Many people from India were taken to different countries to work as labourers during the imperial period. They were also known as indentured labourers. Today, these labourers form a considerable population in those countries like Fiji, Mauritius, and many other countries.

Trade and business diaspora- This group settles in another city or country for trade or business purposes. Cohen gives the case of the Chinese and Lebanese diaspora as its example.

6. Cohen explains the diaspora into four phases. The first phase refers to “the classical use of the term and relates to study of the Jewish experience.” The second phase referred to the 1970-the 80s when the classical meaning was extended, taking into account Africans, Armenians and the Irish. The third phase, from the mid-1990s, was marked by new ways of studying diasporas by doing away with the social constructivist demarcation of



the diasporic idea, into 'homeland' and 'ethnic/religious community. And lastly, the phase of consolidation is marked by a modified reaffirmation of the diasporic belief, including its core elements, standard features, and ideal types.



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