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## **UNIT 79 COLONIAL DIASPORA (ARMENIAN AND CHINESE DIASPORA IN INDIA)**

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- 79.4 Armenian Trade Diaspora and Colonialism
- 79.5 Armenian Diasporic Settlements in India
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### **79.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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Keeping the above-mentioned features of colonialism and the Armenian and Chinese diasporas in mind, the Unit will focus on the forces responsible for it, its features, characteristics and its impact on human migration and the formation of these two ethnic diasporas in India. Although the forces of colonialism impacted colonies differently, the Unit will mainly focus on Armenian and Chinese diaspora in India. After you have gone through the unit, it is hoped that you will be able to understand:

1. The forces responsible for the emergence of colonialism
2. Its chief features and characteristics, including its exploitative nature.
3. The role of colonialism in human migration
4. The formation of Armenian diaspora and its settlement in India
5. The history of Chinese migration, diaspora formation and settlement.

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### **79.2 INTRODUCTION**

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In the earlier units we learnt about various forces responsible for human migration and, as a result, the formation of various diasporas. While the push and pull factors have been the main reasons in the voluntary migration, there were geopolitical forces, which were equally responsible in deciding the course of human migration. Among them, Colonialism was the most singular and profound force, which brought massive demographic movement across the continents. Its impact was so far-reaching that it changed the very course of human history, thus bringing new politico-economic forces to the fore.

The colonial migration and the imperialistic forces were also, in no less measure, impacted by pull and push factors as emerging European economies needed fresh supply of manpower, raw materials and consumers for their industrially produced goods. It was these quests accompanied with political ambition that propelled countries like Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands to navigate, explore and exploit the newfound lands and its people.

In addition to imperial diasporas, there were other ethnic diasporas which were either formed or diluted because of the colonial impact. The examples of Armenian and Chinese diasporas in India conveniently fall into these categories. Both these ethnic groups had immigrated to India as traders, merchants, artisan and craftsmen and as entrepreneurs. With the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese dominating the Indian Ocean trade, both these diasporas lost their salience and were overtaken by the British imperialist forces. What remains today is only a remnant of these diasporas which once had a rich legacy of mercantile and craftsmanship contribution to their host countries.

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### **79.3 ARMENIAN TRADE DIASPORA AND COLONIALISM**

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Colonialism was responsible for the formation of various diasporas as it was marked by displacement, up-rootedness and dislocation of various ethnic and nationalistic communities. In most cases, its impact was pernicious as it not only relocated people to far-flung areas but also harmed the social, economic and political fabrics of the territories they invaded and acquired. Colonialism was responsible for bringing to the hegemony of the Armenian trade diaspora, which had intercontinental presence and was marked with high efficiency and an advanced level of network connectivity. In India, Armenian trade diaspora was a rich, prosperous and thriving community as late as the 1680s as many of the Armenian merchants were owners of ships that carried cargos to the Persian Gulf and traded as far as Indonesian archipelago.

A form of familial-ethnic trade diaspora based on merchant-capitalism, Armenians had dominated the Indian Ocean trade till the end of 17th century. But in the beginning of the 18th century, they had to compete with colonial powers, the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese in the same economic sphere and on the same trade routes. These Armenian merchants were individual entrepreneurs with strong backing of the community but bereft of state-sponsored support in contrast to national-stock-holding companies like the British East India Company. Although they had an advanced level of trade and intelligence network, they were not so well organized and strategically placed to counter the imperial onslaught. To overcome their inherent weakness, they developed indigenous survival mechanisms to meet the new challenges.

When the British East India Company realized that they could not compete with Armenian merchants on a level-playing field and seeing that the competition was getting tough between them and the Armenians, they often resorted to piracy and confiscating Armenian ships on the one pretext or the other. They resorted to extra-judicial means to stop Armenian merchants from carrying out mercantile trade. The confiscation of the Armenian-freighted ship, Santa Catharina in 1746, by Admiral Griffin offers one such example. Santa Catharina was an Armenian ship with a cargo full of silver and other valuables from Bazra

and was bound for Calcutta. It was manned by an Indian crew and followed all navigational laws. Without any provocation, it was confiscated by the British East India Company citing that it belonged to the enemy, the French, with which the British were at loggerheads. The Armenian merchants appealed to the court in London and a protracted battle was fought between the Armenian owners of the ship and the East India Company from 1749 to 1752 with the Armenian losing the case at the end. It is interesting to observe how British colonialism treated various diasporas. While on the one hand, it encouraged Armenian merchants to settle down in its colonies in India and provided them with new opportunities; it also harassed them and used extra-judicial means whenever their commercial interests were thwarted.

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## 79.4 ARMENIAN DIASPORIC SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA

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Armenian trade diaspora is one of the oldest diasporas in the world and offers a good example of both trade as well as a victim diaspora. As a trade diaspora they had mastered the art of overland trade on caravan routes, trading in spices and silk. They would trade as far as northern Poland and Western Europe. However, the first wave of major Armenian dispersal took place in the eleventh century after the collapse of the Armenian kingdom in 1064 when the Seljuks overran its capital Bagradit which was completely destroyed by the invaders. A large number of Armenians escaped to northern shores of the Black Sea and reached Crimea and established thriving colonies at Tana, Taffa and in Kamenits in Poland.

It was the beginning of Armenian dispersal; settlement and diaspora formation uniquely positioned as a trading community. The Armenian diaspora has also been called a victim diaspora because they were persecuted several times, most violently in 1915-16 in Turkey. In fact, they were as disliked as the Jews in Europe and the Chinese in Southeast Asia, inciting jealousy and prejudices amongst the natives. They were supposedly called engrossers, monopolists and greedy middlemen, for their commercial success and the wealth they accumulated for themselves. Such labeling of immigrant communities has been hypothesized as a common response in the course of immigration and diaspora formation of powerful communities.

The first Armenian immigration and settlement in India began as early as the 14th century during the Delhi Sultanate period in Cambay (Surat) in Gujarat. The Armenian community began their commercial attempt in the city selling precious stones, cotton, silk, jewelry and other goods. Unfortunately, there is no historical account to add credence to this claim. What can be said with certainty however is their increased immigration to Surat and other parts of the country from the 16th century onwards. It led to the emergence of a prominent Armenian community with significant presence in Surat, Calcutta and Madras. They were engaged in trade and took active parts in the cultural life of these cities and even in its politics. Unlike other trade and immigrant communities like the Arabs from West Asia, the Armenians came to India with their families, wives and children looking for a permanent place of settlement.

These Armenian traders who had settled in Surat would eke out their livelihood by selling precious products to Armenian-owned vessels coming from Basra and Bandar Abbas. These goods were further exported by these Armenian merchants to Turkey, Egypt, the Levant, Leghorn and Venice, which were sold on a premium. The Armenian trade community had come to India much before any other European traders. In fact, they were the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean trade. And it was Shah Abbas of Safavid Empire who was instrumental in facilitating the New Julfa Armenians in their trade activities by giving them access to Bandor Abbas port in the seventeenth century. The port was an important entry point to the Indian Ocean, which helped the Armenian diaspora to trade with thriving outposts both within as well as outside the community. They followed the overland routes, from Persia, Bactria what is now Afghanistan and Tibet and Kashmir reaching northern parts of India before making it to Indian commercial centres in the 1660s. From Tibet, they could reach heartland China and establish their trading posts there as well. Some of them also took the maritime route and came in Arab ships from Hormuz and Persian Gulf to the port city of Cambay.

There are historical records suggesting the visit of Armenian traders to Akbar's court during the Mughal period. It is suggested that Akbar invited them to settle in his new capital in Agra. Although there are no records of the number of Armenians who came to live in the city, there is an Armenian Church there which dates back to 1562, thus suggesting the presence of a sizable Armenian community. But it was only during the sixteenth and seventeenth century when Armenians were trying to spread to other parts of the world including the Volga from the Caspian Sea, that they moved eastwards reaching India as merchants and traders after the fall of Safavid Empire (1501-1722), which ruled in the present day Iran. In fact, Safavid Empire played an important role in the dispersal of the Armenian community to the Indian Ocean and other parts of the world in the seventeenth century. It was one of the most important Islamic empires and one of its rulers, Shah Abbas moved its capital to Isfahan, which was to become an important site of Armenian settlement. It was during this time that the Armenians were asked to move to Julfa, a suburb of Isfahan. Julfa soon became a vibrant, thriving and prosperous center of Armenian settlement, which monitored and controlled overseas trade through its nodal and peripheral sites of settlement.

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## **79.5 ARMENIANS' COMMERCIAL INTELLIGENCE NETWORK**

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One of the reasons that Armenian merchants were able to survive and thrive under these hostile conditions was that they had built an advanced network of commercial intelligence through centuries' of trade. With the nodal point at Julfa/Isfahan, which was the site of individual and family businesses, they could control and monitor far flung business outposts through their elaborate communication network. They had also established a postal system which was much ahead of its times. These postal systems were individual or family-funded with runners, couriers, merchants, clerics and consuls employed at their service. Their postal delivery system was so reliable that the British and the Spanish took its service to reach out to far-flung transcontinental posts in India, Africa, America and Philippines.

The Armenian families based at Julfa would write letters and send documents about the accounts, prices and new business opportunities to their masters in Julfa. It was because of this and the intra-community trust that it helped them in dominating the Indian Ocean trade. Information was shared over long distances through privately funded networks, which Julfa merchants had mastered. Initially these commercial mails were sent through overland routes by the New Julfa/Isfahan merchants to their agents in India, but were soon replaced with maritime mail delivery after the 18th century. There is historical evidence of some of the leading families like Minasians having their own “runners” which were called shatir and chapar in Persian. These communication networks were also used to transfer credit, capital and resources from one part of the diaspora group to another, thus making knowledge and information a precious commodity. A large number of such communications however focused on prices of precious commodities like Iranian raw silk, opium and cotton textile, trading itineraries and manuals on the transfer of capital and credit.

### Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1. Write a short note on Armenian trade diaspora describing its main features

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2. Describe briefly the commercial and intelligence network that Armenian traders had built and which helped them survive.

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## 79.6 THE EARLY CHINESE MIGRATION TO INDIA

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As mentioned earlier, Armenians in India formed the part of the trade diaspora who came for commercial reasons and for settlement. This was quite unlike the Chinese diaspora who came as sojourners with the intention of returning to their homeland. The demographic distribution of Armenians in India showed a continuous decline after their commercial interests were subjugated by the British. There are no more than 100 Armenian families left in India now. This was in complete contrast to the Chinese diaspora whose number swelled and dwindled depending on their demand in India's workforce market. There are some 3000 Chinese left in Kolkata and over 4,000 in Mumbai. But the figures are contested. While the Armenians were invariably a trading community, the Chinese were employed as skilled and unskilled workers in multiple industries. The Armenian community was well organized and inter-connected while the Chinese migrated to India sporadically.

The history of Chinese immigration to India is almost 200 years old when they started coming in small numbers to work as sailors, fitters and unskilled workers. Some of them shared geographical proximity with other diasporas like the Jews, Parsees and Armenians although each one of them had their own, separate settlement areas. As the Chinese traded and manufactured some of the consumer goods, their name was closely based on some of these products like the Chinese silk, chini (granulated sugar), chinimiti (porcelain products). They are also credited with introducing some of the Chinese products for the first time in mass scale, thus leading to its mass consumption.

Looking at the pattern of their migration and settlement in India, scholars have marked three distinct such periods. One, from the late 18th to 19th century, the second between 1920-1930 and the third phase covers the post-World War II migration. The Chinese migrants who came to India did not belong to a homogenous group but came from diverse sub-ethnic groups from various Chinese provinces and included the Cantonese, Hakka, Shanghai and Hubei. During the first half of the 20th century, a good number of them came from Shantung, Yunnanese and Amoy. Depending on which part of Mainland China they came from, they divided themselves into various categories like Mong, Chun, Han, Hui and Man. The early Chinese group that migrated to India came from Macao, Canton and Amoy regions from South China.

The first known and recorded evidence of Chinese migration and settlement in India comes from Atchipur, which derives its name from its first Chinese settler, Atchew Po, who on his way to trading outpost, was shipwrecked and reached the Indian shore. According to some sources, Atchew came from the Canton region of Southern China and reached Calcutta in 1778. At that time Governor General Warren Hastings headed the British administration in India. Atchew petitioned Hastings for help and settlement. As the Chinese were very industrious people and had helped in the establishment of other British colonies, Hastings granted him land near Calcutta, which he used to set up a sugar factory. As India did not have a skilled workforce to produce sugar, Atchew made several trips to China to bring in trained Chinese manpower.

In 1781, Atchew was granted permission to bring in 110 Chinese workers who were allowed to settle on the land granted by Hastings. Atchew began the production of sugar and established the first sugar mill in the country. That probably explains why sugar was called chini, thus having an allegorical association with the Chinese people. In addition to sugar mill workers, there were others who made their way from Canton, Macao and Hong Kong, which were the emigrants' ports in the South China Sea. There were runaway sailors, port and ship workers who came to work and live in India during this time. Calcutta was also a major sojourn post where sailors would stay and wait for their next China-bound ship. Some of them while on their way to China found good work opportunities and preferred to stay on.

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## **79.7 DEMOGRAPHY AND SETTLEMENT**

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As Atchew brought in more Chinese workers to work in his sugar mills, other Chinese workers began following the early migrants. Calcutta soon

became a popular port for the early Chinese migrants. By 1792, the city had earmarked areas, which were called China Lane and China Bazaar and by 1793 as record shows, there were some ten Chinese shops and houses in these areas. They engaged themselves in various activities and small-time trading businesses. According to one estimate by 1821, there were more than 414 Chinese migrants in the city. Almost all of early migrants during the 18th and 19th century were male and therefore formed an exclusive 'bachelor society' because of their skewed sex ratio.

World War II brought in a new wave of Chinese refugees, especially from Southeast Asia, which substantially increased their population, estimated to have reached 40,000. The 1962 Sino-Indian War was a watershed mark as it forced many of the Chinese diaspora members to either return to their home country or migrate to the western world, thus bringing their population in India drastically down. Many of them went to live in the US, Australia and Canada, thus forming the part of doubly-displaced people. As the Indian Census record of 1991, 2001 and 2011 does not specifically mention their population either in Bombay or Calcutta, it is difficult to cite a headcount of the Chinese people in India. The frequently quoted figure of 3000 Chinese diaspora in Calcutta and some 4,000 in Mumbai, does not correlate with real estimates.

#### CASE STUDY 1: CHINA TOWNS IN KOLKATA AND MUMBAI

But the Chinese diaspora was a vibrant and thriving community in Calcutta and Bombay some few decades back, but their number has now reduced drastically. Their place of settlement was mainly confined to China Town localities of these two cities. In Calcutta, they lived in two China Towns, namely the Old China Town called Cheenapara around Colootola Street and Dr. Sun Yat Sen Road; and the New China Town on the outskirts of Calcutta called Dhapa or Tangra. Majority of the Chinese living in New China Town are those who had come here during the Second World War. The New China Town is also known for Chinese tannery work, a specialized profession exclusively dominated by Chinese migrants in the region.

Unlike Calcutta, the Chinese diaspora in Bombay are small in number and confined to two China towns situated in Nawab Tank Road, in Mazagaon and Shuklaji Street, which is in Nagpada. What remains of their once thriving population are two monuments, associated with their mass presence in the city. One is Chinese cemetery, close to Central Mumbai's Antop Hill, built in

1889 on land bought by Chinese merchants and the second monument is a temple called Kwan Kung temple which was built in 1919. These two Chinatowns of Bombay were once thriving place of commercial activities, which sold Chinese goods and had Chinese grocery shops, traditional medicine

of the area had come to India as refugees during the Chinese civil war when Mao Zedong had begun prosecuting the dissent groups.

The China town areas in Bombay were once known for Chinese goods, its dentists, shoemakers and traders who had arrived in the city from Canton in South China and were well versed in their profession. The East India Company also employed them , especially in Mazgaon dockyard, as sailors and fitters. Their number however kept on declining and by 1960s it had come down to only 15,000 inhabitants. During the 1962 Sino-India war, there was a mass exodus of Chinese both from Bombay and Calcutta. However, many of these Chinese had lived in the city since generation and identified themselves as more Indians than Chinese.

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## 79.8 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE CHINESE DIASPORA

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The early Chinese immigrants who came to India during the British rule were artisans, craftsmen and sugar mill workers who belonged to lower strata of Chinese society. To escape poverty, deprivation and resource-scarcity they had ventured out of China as traders and workers. Initially, many of them worked as fitters at Calcutta port and also as carpenters and cabinet makers. They were employed for their cheap labour. There was also differentiation based on which region of China they came from as each region had developed its own professional expertise. For example, the majority of carpenters and cabinet makers were Cantonese who had initially worked in ship building industry at Kanchrapara, Hooghly dock and in Liluha Railway Workshop and also in jute mills which had sprung up during the 18th and 19th century. As the Cantonese were in majority and in better professions and well settled, they were able to wield considerable influence on the rest of the community members.

There was another group of Hubei migrants who had come from Hubei and were in minority but were professionally successful as dentists and were experts in teeth setting. Many of the local people thronged to them for their dental treatment. This group of Hubei migrants had come to India between 1920 and 1930 and was able to quickly make their mark. They opened dental clinics and were experts in treating dental cavities. Some of them were also using indigenous art of traditional medicine in treating ailments. Another group of Chinese migrants came from Shadong, East China, specialized in silk and soon took to silk peddling. However after the silk import from China was banned in the 1950s, many of them became traders of Indian silk and some of them also opened laundry shops with the help of loans provided by the Chinese banks.

A group of women from Hakka took to salon business and became hairdressers and beauticians. The Hakka men, on the other hand, took to the tannery business in which they had invested since the beginning of 1910s and became shoe-makers and other leather products. Some of them also got into the bakery business and opened shops in different parts of the city. Christian missionaries also employed educated Chinese in translating the Bible and other religious



books from English to Chinese languages. There are also historical records of import of Chinese labour. For example when tea companies lost their monopoly over tea trade in China through a Charter Act of 1833, they began cultivating tea in India. One such company, Assam Tea Company, started importing Chinese labour in large numbers. In fact, the scarcity of tea chest makers and tea labours had posed a serious threat to the tea industry in India for which Chinese labour was imported. It was in 1838 when the first batch of Chinese tea cultivators landed in Calcutta in the vessel named 'Fulty Salam'. Subsequently 'Tenasserin' brought in 47 Chinese tea cultivators in 1839 and 'Asia Felin' brought in 247 Chinese in 1840. According to the Committee for Overseas Chinese, Taipei, some 300 Chinese were hired for railroad construction in colonial India. Some of the Chinese coolies were also brought in for the reclamation of wasteland in Sunderbans. So, while concluding this section, one can say that there were several waves of Chinese migration to India. These migrants came from different parts of China, each specializing in particular skill and profession, thus filling the existing void in colonial India.

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## 79.9 INDO-CHINA WAR, THE GALWAN VALLEY AND THE CHINESE TWICE MIGRANTS

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Although the Chinese diaspora has been living in India since centuries and for generations, they soon become a subject of suspicion and mistrust whenever the two nations - their home and host country, become hostile to each other. During these times, their loyalty is questioned and they are often asked to prove their identity and intentions. If the situation becomes too hostile they are at times interned or deported depending on their status in the host country. A similar situation was observed during the Indo-China War in 1962 when some 3,000 Indian Chinese were interned and remained in prison in Deoli Camp in Rajasthan on the charges of suspicion and mistrust. The war was also responsible for gradual diminishing of their population as many of them either went back to China or took refuge in Western countries. Many of them went to live in Canada, Australia and Hong Kong where they already had a sizable diaspora. Once bustling with life and vibrancy, the China towns in Bombay and Calcutta, fell silent because of the loss of its inhabitants.

The Indian Chinese who went to live abroad still continue to identify themselves with India and its culture and have formed philanthropic and cultural groups to help their fellow beings. Those who were interned at Deoli during the Indo-China war of 1962 and now live in Markham and Scarborough, suburbs of Greater Canada, have formed groups like Hakka Helping Hands and the Association of Chinese Indian Deoli Internees to help the community members. It was no surprise that in May 2020 when Chinese incursion took place at Sino-Indian border, at Galwan Valley, leading to bloody skirmishes between the two nations, the Indian Chinese soon became the target of close scrutiny. Many of them remained indoors and were scared of public backlash. Also during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chinese restaurants were pejoratively named 'corona' because of the alleged origin of the virus in China. These incidents often bring indignity and insecurity to the Indian Chinese, many of whom have preferred to migrate to Western countries thus being displaced and becoming twice migrants in another country after having lived for many generations in India. This reflects

in their numbers, while according to 1951 and 1961 their population in Calcutta alone was 9,215 and 14,607 respectively; it has come down to few thousands after the Indo-China war.

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### 79.10 LET US SUM UP

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After having gone through the unit, you would now have understood how the process of colonization played a catalytic role in diaspora formation. Various ethnic and diasporic groups were differently impacted by the process of colonisation. While it was the major reason that brought an end to Armenian migration to India and its dwindling number, its impact on Chinese migration and the formation of Chinese diaspora was significant. There was also a fundamental difference between these two diasporas in terms of their relationship with homeland and the state of being stateless as in the case of Armenian diaspora. The response of both these diasporas have been different to both colonial powers as well as India, to which they made their home. With the end of trade opportunities in India, the majority of Armenians dispersed to various parts of the world, with some going back to their place of origin. The Chinese diaspora, on the other hand, remained in India for a protracted period of time, moving from one profession to another and from one business to the other. Both the diasporas have not only magnified the multicultural flavour of the country but have also contributed to its development in their own way.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- Note: a) Write your answer in about 50 words.  
b) Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit
3. Describe briefly the early Chinese migrants who came to Calcutta

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4. How is the Armenian Diaspora different from the Chinese diaspora? Elucidate their main features.

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### 79.11 REFERENCES AND SELECT READINGS

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## 79.12 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check your progress 1

1. Armenian trade diaspora in India was a rich, prosperous and thriving community as late as the 1680s as many of the Armenian merchants were owners of ships that carried goods to the Persian Gulf and traded as far as Indonesian archipelago. A form of familial-ethnic trade diaspora, which was based on merchant-capitalism, Armenians had dominated the Indian Ocean trade till the end of 17th century. But in the 18th century, they had to soon compete with colonial powers, the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portuguese in the same economic sphere and trade routes. These Armenian merchants were individual entrepreneurs with strong backing of their community but bereft of state-sponsored support and a national-stock-holding like the British East India Company. Although they had an advanced level of trade and intelligence network, they were not well organized and strategically placed to counter the imperial onslaught.

2. One of the reasons that Armenian merchants were able to survive the colonial powers was that they had built advance network of commercial intelligence. With the nodal point at Julfa/Isfahan, which was the site of individual and family businesses, they could control and monitor far flung business outposts through their elaborate communication network. They had also established a postal system which was ahead of its times and were individual or family-funded with runners, couriers, merchants, clerics and consuls employed at their service. Their postal delivery system was so reliable that the British and the Spanish took its service to reach out to far-flung transcontinental posts in India, Africa, America and Philippines. The Armenian families based at Julfa would write letters and send documents about the accounts, prices and new business opportunities to their masters in Julfa. It was because of this and the intra-community trust that it helped them to dominate the Indian Ocean trade. Within the Armenian network, information was shared over long distances through privately funded networks, which Julfa merchants had mastered over the centuries.

### Check your Progress 2

3. The first known and recorded evidence of Chinese migration and settlement comes from Atchipur, which derives its name from its first Chinese resident Atchew Po, who on his way to trading outpost but was shipwrecked and reached the Indian shore. According to some sources, Atchew came from the Canton region of Southern China and reached Calcutta in 1778. At that time Governor General Warren Hastings headed the British administration in India. Atchew petitioned Hastings for help and settlement. In 1781, Atchew was granted permission to bring in 110 Chinese workers who were allowed to settle on the land granted by Hastings. Atchew began the production of sugar and established the first sugar mill in the country. There were other groups of people including the runaway sailors, port and ship workers who came to work and live in India during this time. Calcutta was also a major sojourn post where sailors would stay and wait for their next China-bound ship. Some of them while on their way to China found good work opportunities and preferred to stay on and work in Calcutta.
4. Armenians in India formed the part of the trade diaspora who came for commercial reasons and for settlement. This was quite unlike the Chinese diaspora who came as sojourners with the intention of returning to their homeland sometime in the future. The demographic distribution of Armenians in India shows a continuous decline after their commercial interests were subjugated by the British. As of now, there are no more than 100 Armenian families left in India. This was in contrast to the Chinese diaspora whose number swelled and dwindled depending on their demand in India's workforce market. There are only a few thousand Chinese left in Kolkata and Mumbai. While the Armenians were invariably a trading community, the Chinese were employed as skilled and unskilled workers in multiple industries. The Armenian community was well organized and inter-connected, unlike the Chinese who migrated to India sporadically.

Colonialism was the main reason that brought an end to Armenian migration to India while in the case of the Chinese diaspora it was the reason for its

formation, starting from the late 18th century to the first few decades of the 20th century. There was also a fundamental difference between these diasporas in terms of their relationship with homeland and the state of being stateless, as was the case with the Armenian diaspora. The response of both these diasporas have been different to both colonial powers as well as India. With the end of trade opportunities in India, the majority of Armenians dispersed to various parts of the world, with some going back to their place of origin. The Chinese diaspora, on the other hand, remained in India for a protracted period, moving from one profession to another and from one business to another. Both the diasporas have not only magnified the multicultural ethos of the country but have also contributed to its development in their own individual ways.

Colonial Diaspora  
(Armenian and Chinese  
Diaspora in India)



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