

Theorizing Diaspora

- Four phases:-

I - Classical use of the term - Capitalized D - limited to Jewish experience.

During 1960s & 70s, the classical meaning was extended systematically becoming a description of dispersion of Africans, Armenians and the Irish.

- Scattering arising from an event that traumatized the group as a whole. sense of victimhood.

II 1980s onwards - diaspora as a 'metaphoric designation' including 'expatriates, expellees, political refugees, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities.

A varied cluster of diasporas depending on their historical experiences, collective narratives and differing relationships to homelands and hostlands.

III From the mid 1990s - viewed the newly designated groups of diaspora (of second phase) from a 'social constructionist' perspective. Influenced by postmodernist readings, social constructionists sought to decompose two of the major building blocks that delimit or demarcate the diasporic idea: 'homeland' and 'ethnic/religious community'.

- Now, identities have become deterritorialized and constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way.

IV Turn of the century - Social constructionists are partially accommodated by theorists but the third phase has created complexities and now they see the danger of emptying the notion of diaspora of its analytical or descriptive power. However, the idea of home and inflection of homeland remain powerful discourses.