Chapter II
DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION

- PHYSICAL FACTORS
- ECONOMIC FACTORS
- SOCIAL FACTORS
- DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS
Why do people move? Numerous possible explanations have been set forth to answer this question. It is general belief that differences in environmental macro-factors of geopolitical spatial units (countries, regions, locations) influence people’s decisions to migrate and thereby cause migration. The exact form of these differences, however, can vary. They are by no means exclusively economic but include also differences in social cultural, political and geo-ecological situations (Fisher et al. 1997, p. 49).

Migration occurs because migrants believe that they will be more satisfied in their needs and desires in the place that they move to than in the place from which they come. Important within the analysis of why migration occurs is perception of spatial differentiation of opportunities – the idea that different geographical locations offer different levels of potential well-being to various sections of human population. It is these perceived differences between places that are important rather than any simple ‘push’ or ‘pull’ mechanism. On an isotropic plain the amount of migration would arguably be relatively small but in a spatially differentiated economy and society migration is likely to be of greater volume and significance, as long as population perceives differentiation to be present. Historically the volume of migration has increased as technological development has occurred. In the agrarian society the spatial differentiation of opportunities may extend only to the difference between villages and market centres. As industrialization and urbanization take place a greater variety of spatial differences become manifest and increase in intensity, the process being accentuated, as in all unplanned economic development, where
investment in, and labour demand for, growing industries are unevenly spread in space. Ravenstein (1885) recognised the importance of economic development in stimulating migration, and this realization is a basis of Zelinsky’s (1971) work on changes in mobility and migration over time (White & Woods 1980, p. 7).

There is a positive and a negative aspect to the migration-provoking situation. Migration may occur as a search for an opportunity to improve one’s lot in life. In this case community of destination exerts a “pull” on the migrant. Migration can also occur as a flight from undesired social or economic situations. These situations constitute an expulsive “push” by community. This “push-pull” theory is an abstraction which is made in order to classify the specific forces at work. In each case of migration, several variables of both types may be operating and interacting, so that the move cannot be attributed wholly either to “push” or “pull” factors alone. Moreover, the particular “mix” of push and pull factors that leads to migration in one person may be very different from that which leads to the migration of another (Bogue 1969, p. 753). According to Lee (1970, pp. 290-92) the factors which enter into the decision to migrate and the process of migration may be summarized under four headings, as follows,

1. Factors associated with the area of origin.
2. Factors associated with the area of destination.
3. Intervening obstacles.
4. Personal factors.

There are however, important differences between the factors associated with the area of origin and those associated with the area of destination. Persons living in an area have an immediate and often long-term acquaintance with the area and usually able to make considered and unhurried judgements regarding
them. This is not necessarily true of the factors associated with the area of
destination. Knowledge of the area of destination is seldom exact, and indeed
some of the advantages and disadvantages of an area can only be perceived by
living there. Thus there is always an element of ignorance or even mystery about
the area of destination.

While migration may result from a comparison of factors at origin and
destination, a simple calculus of +’s and −’s factors does not decide the act of
migration. The balance in favour of move must be enough to overcome the
natural inertia which always exists. Furthermore, between every two points
stands a set of intervening obstacles which may be slight in some instances and
insurmountable in others. The most studied of these variables is distance, which,
while omnipresent, is by no means the most important. Actual physical barrier
like the Berlin Wall may be restrict the movement. Different people are of
course affected in different ways by same set of obstacles. What may be trivial
of some people – the cost of transporting household goods, for example may be
prohibitive to others.

Finally, there are many personal factors, which affect individual households
and facilitate or retard migration. Some of these are more or less constant
throughout the life of the individual, while others are associated with stage in life
cycle and in particular with sharp breaks that denote passage from one stage to
another.

In this connection, we must note that it is not so much the actual factors at
origin and destination as the perception of these factors which results in
migration. Personal sensitivities, intelligence, and awareness of conditions
elsewhere enter into the evaluation of the situation at origin, and knowledge of
situation at destination depends upon personal contacts or upon sources of information which are not universally available. In addition, there are personalities which are resistant to change — change of residence as well as other changes — and there are personalities which welcome change for the sake of change. For some individuals, there must compelling reasons for migration, while for others little provocation or promise suffices. The decision to migrate, therefore, is never completely rational, and for some persons the rational component is much less than the irrational. We must expect, therefore, to find many exceptions to our generalizations since transient emotions, mental disorder, and accidental occurrence account for a considerable proportion of the total migrations. This conceptualization of migration as involving a set of factors at origin and destination, a set of intervening obstacles and a series of personal factors is a simple one which may perhaps be accepted as self-evident.

Apart from the above brief discussion about relevant factors associated with the decision to migrate and the process of migration, there are various factors which have particular impact on migration ‘push-pull’ that are required to be emphasized before any enquiry of the problem relating to the process of migration. Here only physical, economic, social and demographic factors of migration are discussed.

PHYSICAL FACTORS

From time immemorial physical factors such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, soil erosion, climatic fluctuations, floods, droughts etc. have compelled the people to leave their place of residence.

Deforestation coupled with soil erosion is considered to be an important determinant of shifting settlement in humid tropics specially on areas of high relief. Whenever people face these problems, they prefer to move to better areas.
Sometimes frequent occurrence of floods and droughts also force people to desert their place of origin in favour of safer area. During early days epidemics were considered to be a vital force in driving people from one region to another. But these forces have become insignificant due to the development of medical science. Health resort towns attract people of the plains in tropical belt specially during summer season to improve their health conditions. Similarly people from cold temperate region move out for sea resorts during winter season to enjoy the warmth of costal areas. The evidence of the role of physical factors on human migration is also available in terms of the white settlement. Wherever they moved they primarily considered climatic conditions. They selected either high mountainous region in tropics or the coastal areas or temperate climatic region where they were able to get ideal climatic conditions. The eastern high lands of Africa, the Mediterranean climatic region of South Africa, and high lands of South America, south-eastern and south-western parts of Australia etc. attracted the white settlement (Sinha and Ataullah 1987, pp. 78-79).

There are adequate evidences to prove that people were forced to leave their area of habitation because of the changing course of streams. There are innumerable instances of human migration and the rehabilitation in the Ganga, the Kosi, the Gandak, the Sone river basins etc. in India. Similar phenomena occurred in several parts of the world too and inhabitations because of the shifting behaviour of the streams were left with no alternative except to leave the riverine tracts (Chandra 1991, p. 200). Even today the role of physical factors has not become insignificant, although scientists are in a position to bring modification in natural conditions. Artificial climatic conditions such as air conditioning, invention of disease resisting plants, animals, crops and control over epidemics have enabled human being to settle even in unsuitable
geographical regions. Previously deserts used to be discarded by migrants, but today developed irrigation facilities have transformed the scenery of most of semi-arid areas and some of them become even better than humid plains.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Of all the factors which motivate one to migrate, the most import are the economic factors, because of which one leaves his original residence and migrate to another place. In search of better opportunity for occupation a large number of people are migrating from Asia to the European countries, from rural areas to the urban areas and from mountainous regions to the fertile plains. All these cases of migration have better occupation as the main motivating considerations. In pre-industrial stage lack of cultivated land was most important migrating factor. Because of the growth of population per capita share of land has reduced and it has become difficult for rural people to maintain their families with inadequate agricultural land. Therefore, the attitude of people has changed and they generally advice their family members to earn money by migrating to urban areas (Sinha and Ataullah 1987, p. 79).

The areas of inadequate means of livelihood very often push people while productive and resourceful areas attract migrants. The scarcity of fertile land in regions of emigration and its relative abundance in regions of immigration have played a major part in inducing people to migrate. Scarcity of land also acts as a push while the existence of plenty of fertile virgin lands acts as pull (Chandra 1991, pp. 200-01). Inadequacy of proper jobs and employment opportunities also compelled people specifically youths to leave their residence for the regions where jobs and employment may be found. It is the main cause that Indian scientists are migrating to the developed countries as the part of brain drain migration.
Lee has hypothesized that the volume of migration in a society will vary with fluctuations in the economy. Migration increases during times of economic prosperity and decreases during economic hard time. Lee reasoned that during times of economic prosperity, new business and industries would be created. These new economic enterprises would require more new workers than might be available locally. Furthermore, it is likely that there would be some unevenness in prosperity throughout the country. Some areas might not be enjoying economic growth even as other areas were flourishing. Under these circumstances, the places of origin of many people would have economic minuses compared to the economic pluses of the areas with new business and industries (Kammeyer and Ginn 1988, p. 125). And as such industrial development has been a very important factor in determining rural to urban migration (Mishra 1981, p. 236). Hence, the motive leading to migration have probably varied but little from age to age, the economic motives being dominant at all times, although not of equal importance in all movements. Since individual circumstances entered more and more into consideration, but, even so, desire to better one’s position economically – the search for better opportunities – has been dominant motive among both international migrants and internal migrants. Comparatively few people or individual who are reasonably well satisfied with their economic positions move to new homes (Thompson 1953, p. 274). Thus, at both the international and inter-regional scales, differential levels of income, employment and economic development are potent reasons for migration. To take one example, transatlantic migration has been related to fluctuations in American and British trade cycle (Woods 1979, p. 192).
SOCIAL FACTORS

Although most of the factors of migration are considered to be economic, social factors cannot be considered less significant. Social customs, traditions, social prejudices etc., also induce people to migrate from one place to another. In rural areas social conditions remain more traditional oriented, while urban areas expose mixed social conditions because urban centres generally have people of different cultural background and migrants are considered to be best carrier of culture.

Female marriage migration is a socio-cultural phenomenon and it is the largest inside a country. However, the migration of brides need not distort the sex ratio of the population to large extent. Now a days, migration is on the individual or non-kinship basis. Thousands of Indian travel every year to some foreign countries to achieve higher education in the field of engineering, medicine, agriculture besides other specialization in science and technology. Some internal migrations result from desire to avoid social tension of joint family system (Chandra 1991, p. 203). Other social factors controlling migration include socio-economic status, information network, cultural contact, desire for social upliftment and government policies. The socio-economic status of the potential migrant has been considered as an important factor in determining the magnitude and direction of migration. However, in the contemporary developed world, there is overwhelming evidence that better educated, more skilled and economically better off people have greater propensity to migrate, particularly over long. Higher status people have the ability, the training and the information and thus become more mobile. Closely associated with this factor is the factor of information network. The availability of information through education, cultural
contacts, spatial interaction also widens migration propensity spectrum. The information network and cultural contact widens the horizons for job opportunities.

Even today in most of the rural areas people practice their traditional occupation. Whenever socially depressed communities attain economic status, they want to get rid of the traditional occupation and avail themselves of social status because of their traditional occupation and social position. In such cases people prefer to settle in urban areas where they can hide their traditional occupation, adopt new occupation, hold social position and socialize among people of higher status.

Urban areas have much better conditions for social development. Educational facilities are easily and adequately available here. People from rural areas send their children for better education, better social thinking and bright future. Sometimes people even migrate to urban areas to avail themselves proper educational facilities, because in most of the rural areas there are only ordinary schools and sometimes the students have to cover long distance on foot. Most particularly girls’ education become a problem in rural areas. Those who want to provide higher education to their daughters feel much difficulty in rural areas particularly because of the absence of girl’s schools and colleges and partly due to social environment prevailing in the rural areas. People having less education discourage late marriage and higher education of the girls. Urban areas provide better social conditions because of the presence of social institutions like clubs, religious institutions, recreational places like cinema, theatres, playgrounds, parks etc. These facilities attract people from different areas where such facilities do not exist.
DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

A number of demographic factors also play a determining role in the migration propensity spectrum. For instance, age has been recognized as one of the important demographic factors controlling the degree of desire to move among the potential migrants. No wonder young adults were more migratory than other groups. Similarly the regional disparities in the rate of natural increase provide the basis for all movements by way of their role in giving a specific pattern to population resource nexus of an area. It is the rate of growth of population that determines the extent of population pressure in an area. The varying degree of population pressure vis-à-vis resource potential of the area finds expression through migration of population. The historic movement of population across the Atlantic was an expression of increasing stress upon the resources of Europe (Chandna 2006 p. 252). In India, the demographic upsurge of recent years has created an unbearable over-population of rural areas, and many have therefore quitted the villages, notably the Brahmans, who are the ground landlords (Beaujeu-Garnier 1978, p. 221).

Where there is very high density of population coupled with less per capita land share, people migrate to the places having low density of population and adequately cultivable land. Migration is a process that equalizes uneven distribution of population. This process not only enables quantitative change but also determines qualitative aspect of population. People with higher education, better technical knowhow and work experience move to new areas for better earnings. Most of the Middle-East countries are sparsely populated and have acute shortage of skilled labour force. Therefore these countries have become focal point of migrants.
Birth rate and death rate also influence human migration. Areas having low birth rate or high death rate or both experience labour shortage and such areas attract migrants from other areas for job opportunities. Most of the developed nations have almost controlled high birth rate, and in these nations in spite of automation, labour supply is inadequate. As such we find brain drain from developing nations to these countries.
References


