

Inhibitive and Facilitative Factors of Migration

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ABSTRACT

Movement of people from one place to another is a common observation. But everyone does not do so. So, it is sociologically rewarding to understand why some people or a group of people undertakes to migrate while another group of people does not. On a closer analysis, some inhibitive as well as facilitative factors are found at the root of this phenomenon, depending on their socio-economic positioning in the wider social system. In this research paper, the inhibitive factors have also been understood in the sense of restrictive ones, while the facilitative factors been understood in terms of social selectivities, particularly in the overall perspective of the contemporary Indian society.

Key Words : Social mobility, Migration: large scale and small-scale, Demographic processes, Social evolution, Return migration, Push-and-pull factors, Urban growth, Low subsistence, Out-migrants, Conspicuous consumption, Horizontal and vertical mobility, Cultural identity.

INTRODUCTION

If the trend of migration in India is viewed as spatial, the volume of short-distance rural to rural migration is much higher as compared with other streams of migration, although it has a declining trend by time and space as pointed out by Ravenstein (1885). The volume of long-distance rural to urban migration is relatively much smaller but it has increased with distance, although it is not inversely proportional to the distance from intra-district to inter-state levels of migration. The long-distance migration is important in the overall streams of migration because it plays a significant role in social change, but the migration data show that the proportion of population living outside the districts of birth has been very small in India as compared with the developed societies. This gives an index of the slow mobility of the Indian population.

Some of the sociological approaches have pointed out that the migration process is contingent upon institutional and cultural suitability. The villages in India are characterized more by affective rather than affective-neutral behavior. The villagers have deep-rooted emotional attachment to their native locale, consisting of

institutional patterns and cultural traditions. This attachment exerts a strong pressure on them to hold them at their place of origin. The most important factor is their attachment to the existing pattern of agricultural production, which holds them and pulls them to remain at their native place. The Indian society is predominantly agrarian, where according to the 2001 census, about 73 per cent of the population resides in rural areas. The position remains broadly similar as per the 1911 census report. Most of the rural population is engaged in farming, which needs manual work and constant attention. Therefore, neither the farmers who own the land nor the agricultural workers who supply the agricultural labour can be easily separated from the place of agricultural work.

METHODOLOGY

For presentation of the kind of discussion under consideration it was thought best to go by blending the reflective-analytical and the observational method.

Inhibitive factors : restrictions on migration:

Since most of the farming is done at the subsistence

level in India, there is hardly any surplus, particularly for the landless agricultural workers, marginal farmers, and the tenants to move out and change their place of residence. They cannot live easily without their agricultural work and cannot easily meet the costs of their travel to go out to work. Todaro's (1969) model of costs and benefits of migration is quite applicable here. They can neither afford the moving costs because of agricultural poverty nor the costs of living at the destination due to lack of surplus. They are also unable to bear the emotional costs because they are poor and are very much emotionally tagged with the land, agricultural work and the family network. As a result, their movement is not easily possible in spite of the kind of changes that have taken place in rural areas in India. However, they do migrate but only for a short-distance from rural to rural areas, so their affinity to the place of origin remains intact. Therefore, the short-distance stream of migration still remains predominant with a substantial volume of migrants in this stream.

The agrarian economy in India has not been developed as the source of an income-generating economy. It remains a low income-subsistence economy. The poverty level in general and agricultural poverty in particular has not significantly declined in India (Economic Survey, 1994-95). The impoverished Indian agriculture proves to be stronger minus or negative factor to repel or push the village population to move out and easily afford the costs of a longer destination in search of better opportunities. Such a situation contradicts Lee's (1966) argument in his push-pull factors analysis of migration. This also does not support Ravenstein's thesis that migration stream from rural to urban areas has an in-built tendency to increase along with the overall development. Contrary to this, the growth rate of lifetime migrants in India has declined along with the pace of progress. This means that the economic factor alone is neither the key push factor at the place of origin nor the main pull factor at the place of destination, though the economic factor looks strongly related to migration.

The factors beneath the economic factor are the social class related factors of the Indian rural society, which hold the people within their native locale. The factors which pull them are, for example, the nature of farming, labour-intensive economy, continuous attention needed in agricultural work, distribution of land and land use by agricultural workers, the tenurial system of agriculture and its social conditions, land related social

responsibilities and land inheritance, affectivity and emotional attachment with the land, the family and the family network, affinity with kin-groups and with broader social groups consisting of the village, locality and the community, etc. They are bottlenecks and restrict the process of migration. Economic development in rural areas has not reached the critical stage to remove the social barriers of the process of geographical mobility of population, particularly the long-distance migration.

Among the social factors caste also tends to restrict the spatial mobility of population. Caste is a typical characteristic of the Indian society. It governs the whole Hindu community and also affects other communities in India. The Hindus have the Dravidian characteristic of living in a closed-knit community, which is strengthened by the caste system because of its bond of caste endogamy, along with its hypergamous tendency. The basic characteristics of the system of caste are its localised nature and its close-knit social character, stiff hierarchical caste positions, the rigid rules of caste endogamy and caste associations, traditionally defined caste-based occupational division of labour, element of purity-pollution and the restriction on social interaction. Directly or indirectly, these features tend to restrict spatial mobility and hamper the process of assimilation of migrants among various caste groups into a new social formation.

Caste has both geographical as well as social boundaries. The bonds of endogamy and restriction on social interaction make it difficult for the members of various caste groups to cross the boundaries. They exert even stronger social pressures on women who cannot cross the socio-geographical boundaries of their caste and village communities easily. They are even forbidden to mix up with other caste groups and cross the boundaries of the local castes. The village exogamy (matrimonial selection between the villages as a norm), co-existing with the caste endogamy (matrimonial selection within the caste), makes a person move out of the geographical boundary of the village community but moving out of the social boundary of the caste is a difficult proposition. Thus, caste restricts mobility and does not promote long-distance migration.

The system of caste also tends to restrict the spatial mobility of a population because of the caste interests in the continuance of patriarchal matrimonial residence, integration and consolidation of caste system and maintenance of its rigidity and its close knit social

character. Those who have not moved out of their places of residence strictly follow the caste-based normative order, maintain family lineage, prefer to live together, follow the caste-based occupation and make the patriarchal matrimonial residence and family line stronger. Contrary to this, those who have moved out of their native locale, reflect significant changes in terms of their occupational status, value-orientation, social consciousness, matrimonial choice and in their attitude of indifference towards caste-endogamy and family patriarchy. However, the break from their native traditions and the place of residence due to their out-migration creates a certain amount of maladjustment and uneasiness among them at the place of destination because they are considered outcasts. If such out-migrants go back to their native locale, they are treated as strangers, outsiders, suspects and remain unrecognized by the younger generation because they have broken the norms of their caste groups and village community. Thus, the caste system becomes a barrier in the process of migration.

Similarly, the family structure, marital status and the diversity of traditions also tends to restrict spatial mobility of a population. The average age of marriage in India has not significantly increased. The fertility and mortality rates are declining but are still high in rural areas. The incidence of high fertility and low age at marriage in rural areas indirectly pose a problem in the process of migration because they directly affect an early family formation, family size and dependency ratio, which make the family's bonds stronger and increase the social pressure on the family member in the working age group to pay regular and personal attention to family's social responsibilities. This tends to restrict their movement out of the family and native place. The prevalence of the joint household blocks the movement further. The Hindu family organization is characterized by patrilocal and patriarchal principles, which sanction descent by male members of the family, who ensure inheritance and family lineage. These features of the family remain strong and intact even today. They do not encourage the male members to move out and lose their monopoly over the household, its property, and its domestic services being extended to them by the female members. Such services are not easily available at the place of destination.

Since there is no significant break in the traditional structure of the household in rural areas, the affectivity or emotional attachment to the family, the locality and

the village, the community firmly holds and pulls the people to remain within the area of their origin. Thus, as a source of promoting personal and socio-economic motivations, the family works what Lee calls 'the intervening obstacle of migration'. Therefore, to accelerate the process of migration, the existing institutional patterns need to be changed, so that value orientations like the affectivity, personal and individual motive, and localism are replaced by affective-neutrality, impersonal and collective motives, wider interest, and cosmopolitanism. The changes in the institutional patterns and associated value-orientations are possible only by activating the forces of modernization, so that the changes become favourable to repel the people and push them out from the areas of origin.

Another factor that has a negative impact on migration is the cultural factor which consists of local cultural traditions, customs, local dialects and a certain lifestyle of the people at the place of origin. They tend to hold the people within their areas because in the event of out-migration, native people at the place of destination will have to encounter, earn, and accept the alien cultural traditions at the source and the urban cosmopolitan traditions at the destination. The people at the source do not easily take the decision to move out because of the fear of the cultural gap and social maladjustment. The Indian cultural pluralism is peculiar. It tends to restrict and discourage people to move out.

However, the diversity of cultural traditions, family structure, marital status, system of caste, the traditional model of the system of agricultural production and educational backwardness which reinforce each other, are stronger barriers in migration. The incidence of high illiteracy and educational backwardness reinforces traditionalism and hampers movement of the population. According to the data quoted by Premi (2005), the proportion of illiterates in India was 47.8 per cent in 1991 and 35.0 per cent in 2001. In 1991, more than 60 per cent rural population (52.9 % male and 75.2 % female) was illiterate. There were only 5.3 per cent rural people who were educated up to matriculation or higher secondary level, and only 2.0 per cent (1.6 % male and 0.4 % female) of rural population was educated up to graduation and above, according to the 1991 census.

Education is an important push factor for migration because it is an ideal to be achieved by moving out but educational backwardness tends to work as a pull factor. It makes a population immobile because the traditional mind-set has not changed. Educational advancement

creates further desire for education and pushes people to move to areas where quality education is available. The difference in rural and urban standards of education is also a factor of migration. Those desiring to get standard English-based urban education tend to move out to urban areas, although they face stiff competition for better migration. Thus, education serves as both the push and the pull factors of migration and also as a factor for return-migration.

Facilitative factors:

The rural to urban stream of internal migration is the most important stream from the viewpoint of social change. In spite of the immobile nature of the Indian population, there are social factors that push the flow of the population from rural to urban areas. This shows a faster increase in the volume of migration from rural to urban centres of absorption. The existing conditions of those centres show that the influx of rural to urban migration has greatly exceeded the absorption level of those centres. The factors that facilitate the influx can be examined within the framework of a situation-specific push-and-pull factors analysis. This frame of reference emphasizes on the fact that migration is a result of the interplay between the expulsive forces at the place of origin and the attractive forces at the place of destination.

In Lee's formulation in this regard, there is a stress on the economic factor but the matrix of the socio-economic push and pull factors of migration, broadly, takes into account both the economic and sociological viewpoints. The push and pull factors that determine the motives of migration depend on the objective socio-economic conditions and the values attached to migration in the society. The factors that shape the motive of migration are interrelated. There are a number of factors that determine the motives for a single act of migration. The economic motive is considered to be the root cause of the act of migration but the objective conditions that promote economic motives, the value that is attached to migration, the traits of population that emerge to affect migration, and the decision regarding the act of migration all depend on the kind of socio-economic, structural and cultural conditions that exist at the place of origin and at the place of destination.

The push and pull factors co-exist at both the source and the destination levels. They are mutually interdependent. The push will not work unless there is a pull and *vice versa*. They are separated for convenience

in the study of rural to urban migration. The matrix of push factors functions at source (rural). It pushes the individual towards the destination (urban). The matrix of pull factors functions at the destination. It pulls the individual from the home in rural areas to the city (in urban areas). The social factors that push the shift of population and cause migration are discussed briefly and separately in the following sections.

Social selectivities in migration:

One of the principles of Lee's theory of *the push-pull factors analysis* is the principle of selectivity operating in the process of migration. Many studies in India and in other countries (UN Publications of 1984, 1990, 1996) have confirmed this principle of the universally selective character of migration. It is selective because migration performs different social functions for different people who perceive migration differently according to their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Those who intend to migrate respond favourably to the *minus factors* (unfavourable social conditions of living) at the place of origin, which push them to move to the place of destination they have chosen. According to Lee's formulation, they tend to be negatively selective in their response to the minus factors. Similarly, those who intend to migrate tend to respond favourably to the *push factors* (favourable social conditions of living) at the place of destination which attracts and pulls them to move. They tend to be positively selective in purpose and in their response to the plus factors.

Here, the principle of selectivity implies that migration is selective of persons of certain socio-economic and demographic backgrounds or characteristics. This means that a certain section of total population of the place of origin acts more favourably to move out with certain purpose in mind. The selectivity by persons or sections is related to selectivity by response or purpose and *vice versa*. The variation in one will lead to a variation in the other. If, for example, the age-group or the class-background of the migrants varies, the purpose of migration will also vary. Therefore, scholars are interested in examining the correlations between the two selectivities. They operate in every population through a number of factors. Some of them, socially important, are age and sex, caste and class, educational level, marital status, and family-type. The selectivities in migration operate along these factors, as briefly discussed below.

Age and sex:

Selectivity by age is a universally accepted character of migration. The migrants are predominantly young adults in the working age group ranging from about 15-20 to 30-5 years (UN Publication, 1973). A sample survey conducted in some of the villages in eastern Uttar Pradesh shows that most of the migrants belong to the 15-30 year age-group. A comparative study of Bihar, West Bengal, and Kerala, and the study of the Ludhiana district of Punjab, point out that migration is highly selective (Oberai *et al.*, 1989, Singh, 1986, p. 107, and Oberai and Manmohan Singh, 1983, p. 399). These studies identify the age group of migrants, which generally ranges from 15 to 25 and 29 years. The age of migrants varies by sex, marital status and other social factors but the selectivity by age while the young remains a constant feature. This means that the propensity to move out and actively respond to better social and economic conditions is relatively much higher among the young adults. It is their natural urge to be economically active, risk-oriented, prone to migration, and socially adjustable.

This urge is reinforced by their desire to attain greater social maturation by being away from the constraints of the family and the neighbourhood. In the male dominated Indian society, it is the primary moral duty of the male adult to explore opportunities to earn and support the family, in which the female is considered as secondary. It is due to this that the males in the working age groups are relatively more active economically and their proportion in the work force is comparatively higher in general. The younger people predominate in the long-journey migration in search of better opportunities. The report on *Women in the Villages, Men in the Towns* (UNESCO, 1990) examines the impact of sex selective migration on women and family members left behind in rural areas by the young male migrants.

The female migrants are also drawn from young age groups but they are a little younger than the male migrants. Their concentration is the highest in the age group 15-9, as against the highest concentration of male migrants in the age-group 20-4. However, both male and female migrants are drawn in large numbers from the age-group 20-4 alone (Singh, 1986, p. 107). The female migrants are predominantly young and married, and their migration, although largely short-distance, is mainly a marriage migration. Their concentration in the relatively younger age group is due to the differences in male and female age at marriage, with females being married at a

relatively younger age. They are bound to move out because of the social compulsion of marriage. However, it is observed that the principle of selectivity in migration by age and sex operates through certain socio-economic compulsions but the migrants from both the sexes largely belong to selectively younger age groups as compared with non-migrants.

Caste and class:

It is observed that the migrants are also differentiated by their social and economic backgrounds. The propensity to migrate is strongly associated with the caste-class combined two important hierarchically arranged social characteristics of the village society (Zachariah, 1968, Oberol, 1983). Those who tend to migrate, largely come from lower and upper caste and class backgrounds. The study on the causes and the consequences of internal migration (Oberai and Manmohan Singh, 1983, p. 400) reveals that the proportion of low caste migrants is increasing because of caste selective migration. According to the study, this can have severe social and political repercussions in times to come. The lower caste and class migrants consist of a bulk of landless, poor, marginalized, unskilled and displaced agricultural labourers. They are low-caste, low-status, low-subsistence, and low-paid group of migrants. They are pushed by rural poverty and the miserable rural social conditions. They are drawn and pulled by urban opportunities. They have nothing to lose in moving for search of livelihood. The upper class migrants consist of a small group of a relatively better-off section of rural population. They are high-caste, high-status, high-income, and propertied class of rural people, who are pulled by urban opportunities and tend to migrate for gain.

The predominantly young adults from these two broad social groups tend to move towards urban areas according to their own caste and class-based perceived values of migration and on the basis of their own subjective assessment of the social conditions at the place of origin and the destination. They respond differently to social conditions and tend to migrate accordingly to achieve their desired ends. However, there is no sufficient evidence to support that most migrants come from these two major social groups of the village society in India. But, the pattern of social selectivity in migration by caste and class factors does indicate that these factors make the process of migration socially selective.

Educational status:

The propensity to migrate varies by the level of education, as though migration is also selective of educational status. Education is an index of the socio-economic status. The educational investment in human capital improves the quality of life. It makes people knowledgeable, skillful, and suitable for diverse white-collar job opportunities which are available more in urban areas. The increase in educational levels of the people makes manual and agricultural work increasingly incompatible with their education and their occupational aspirations. They move towards urban areas seeking more education and better opportunities of life, for a career into services and skilled non-agricultural industrial and professional areas, and for overall exposure to the city. The rural educated persons are a small section of persons from better-off socio-economic backgrounds of the rural society. The other section pushed into urban areas is the section of the bulk of illiterate and barely literate population which is confronted with the problem of rural poverty. They move towards urban areas to earn their livelihood and to seek unskilled and semi-skilled job opportunities.

The migration is selective by education because the educated persons, whose aspirations are changed, tend to move out of their place of origin in search of better jobs and career options. Contrary to this, the illiterate or barely literate persons, who are confronted with the problem of rural poverty and limited options, aspirations and work incentives in rural areas, are also pushed out for better work opportunities in urban areas. Both the literacy (formal education) as well as illiteracy coupled with poverty become the push factors of migration and, therefore, most rural migrants belong selectively either to the educated or the illiterate/barely literate sections of rural population.

Marital status:

Certain characteristics of the marital status of a population affect migration. Migration is, as pointed out earlier, an age selective process. The migrants, married and unmarried, male and female, are relatively young by age. A general trend in marital selectivity is that rural to urban migration is positively selective of unmarried young adults of both the sexes (Verma, 1977). Among the male young migrants, migration is highly selective and it is the single, unmarried youth who predominate. There is a significant proportion of married young male migrants

who leave behind their wives at the place of origin and move out to urban areas to work in close contact with their family at home (Zachariah, 1968). The older married men in the village are less mobile probably because of greater sense of family bonds and family obligations.

The pattern of marital selectivity shows that, due to the marriage factor, married young women are more mobile than married young men but the single young men are more mobile than single young women. The young married women are mobile because of marriage compulsions, patrilocal residence and village-exogamous conjugal relations. The system of marriage promotes a substantial volume of female migration in India. Single females are not expected to move out of the village before marriage because of socio-cultural reasons and the domestic role-responsibility, as compared with single males who are expected to move out for socio-economic reasons.

However, the marital selectivity in rural to urban migration varies by region, depending on the level of advancement, age at marriage, and age-structure of the population. For example, in the educationally advanced state of Kerala, the proportion of single unmarried young women out-migrants is more than the state of Bihar where the age at marriage and the per capita income are relatively lower, the fertility level and the dependency ratio are higher, along with a broader lower age structure of the population and the proportion of married young male out-migrants which remains high (Singh, 1954). However, the marital status being affected by various factors, makes the process of migration selective in character.

Family-type:

The rural to urban migration is also selective by the family-type. The larger the size of the family and the higher the dependency ratio, the greater will be the propensity among the younger family members to explore new sources of earnings outside the family (UN Publication, 1973). Families with a large number of children tend to promote migration. Such families are characterized by higher fertility level and high dependency ratio, lower age at marriage and early family formation, hierarchically arranged ascribed social statuses, centralized authority of family support and control, a wider kinship network and traditional value system. The family works as a well-knit cohesive system but it has its own germs of disintegration and its own method of preparing

the young for out-migration. The family with such characteristics is a typical feature of the Indian rural society as against the predominance of smaller or nuclear families in urban areas. The nuclear family is characterized by a limited number of children, lower fertility level and dependency ratio, higher age at marriage, and are more advanced and less hierarchical in character.

These two family types perform different roles in the process of migration. The joint family motivates the young family members for out migration because of its internal social pressures. It makes the process of migration selective of family-type. Its supply of urbanward migrants is supplemented by the nuclear family, which provides space for the rural migrants to be adjusted and absorbed in urban areas. A joint family encourages migration from the place of origin in rural areas, while a nuclear family provides space for the absorption of such migrants at the place of destination in urban areas.

Conclusion:

It is thus clear that the socially selective character of migration clearly indicates that migration is not a random phenomenon. It is a deliberately selective process by age and sex, caste and class, educational level, marital status, and family-type. There is a lack of sufficient empirical evidence to each of these factors of classification of migrants but available studies and surveys draw attention to such selectivity in migration. Since migration and urbanization are very closely interlinked processes, their characteristics affect each other. The rural inequality and the selectivity of rural migrants are reproduced into urban selectivity and inequality. It is evident in the selective character of concentration, distribution, and location of the migrant population in urban areas in quantitative terms. It is also evident in qualitative terms in the selective nature of interaction between the alien rural migrants in urban areas and the native long-settled urbanites. The rural migrants are resocialised, get different exposure in the city life and access to urban opportunities but the factors of selectivity in migration affect their exposure to city life. The rural inequality in the form of selective migration in terms of caste, class, education, age, and sex forms a continuum with urban inequality having far reaching social implications not only for social stability but also for social change.

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