Migration Theories

The decision to migrate is the outcome of human psychology and behaviour. Human behaviour cannot be subjected to any universal and uniform law. However, many studies and models relating to migration have tried to find out some pattern and order in the migration decisions of individuals. In recent years many models have been presented by geographers, economists and sociologists. In this connection one can cite the names of Lee, Petersen, Grale, Rossi, Wolpert, Gould, Prothero, Todaro, Pryor, Ravenstein and others.

Theory building in the field of migration is almost a century old if Ravenstein's attempt of 1885 is considered as the beginning point. Lee has forwarded a set of general theories and hypotheses concerning migration process on the lines similar to that of Ravenstein. A comprehensive typology of migration has also been developed by Petersen. Pryor stresses on the significance of individual, adjustive, institutional, adoptive and information diffusion factors for comprehending this residential relocation which takes place through migration. Grale while commenting on Rossi's life cycle hypothesis and Hagerstrand's idea of temporal and spatial stationarity argues that although models definately help in search of pattern and order, yet there is no escape from simple descriptive studies. From the many models and studies put forward on migration, one can call out some basic laws or behaviour patterns.

"Ravenstein's Laws of Migration"

The first formal attempts on theoretical formulations on migration was made by Ravenstein in 1885 when he gave the following laws of migration which he derived from an analysis of

Intra-country movements within Britain in 19th century using census birth place data.

Law 1° Migration and Distance

a) The great body of migrants only proceed a short distance and as the distance from centre increases, the volume of migrants decreases → Distance Decay.

b) Migrants proceeding long distances generally go by preference to one of the great centres of commerce and industry.

Law 2° Migration by Stages

a) There takes place consequently a universal shifting or displacement of population, which produces currents of migration, setting in the direction of the great centres of commerce and industry which absorb the migrants.

b) The inhabitants of the country immediately surrounding a town of rapid growth flock into it, the gaps thus left in the rural population are filled up by migrants from more remote districts, until the attractive force of one of the rapidly growing cities makes its influence felt, step by step, to the most remote corner of the Kingdom.

c) The process of dispersion is the inverse of that of absorption and exhibits similar features.

Law 3° Streams and Counterstream

Each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current. In modern terminology, stream and counterstream have been substituted for Ravenstein's current and counter-current.

Law 4° Urban-rural differences in propensity to migrate

The natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of the country.

Law 5° Predominance of females among short-distance migrants

Females appear to predominate among short-journey migrants.

Law 6° Technology and migration

An increase in the means of locomotion and a development of manufactures and commerce have led to an increase of migration.

Law 7° Dominance of economic motive

Oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate, uncongenial social surroundings and even compulsion, all have produced and are still producing currents of migration, but none of these currents can compare in volume with that which arises from the desire inherent in most men to better themselves in material respects.

Most of the laws forwarded by Ravenstein seem to have stood the test of time. Pryor found these laws to be largely valid in his study pertaining to experience of Malaysia and other countries.

"Zipf's Gravity Model"

After Ravenstein, there was no attempt at formulating theories for a long interval of over 50 years. Zipf in 1946 attempted to draw upon physical settings to explain the movement of individuals. Their theories are labelled as gravitational. According to this model, people move as if drawn by a gravitational force that diminishes with distance; the number of persons who moved between any two areas is directly proportional to the product of the two populations and inversely proportional to the distance between them.

$$M_{ij} = \frac{P_i P_j}{d_{ij}}$$

(M_{ij} = Migration between i and j)

Despite the simplicity of Zipf's models several objections have found it unsatisfactory. This model is ① unrealistic as it is symmetrical, assuming equal flow in both directions. It doesnot specify ② why there is such an interaction and it doesnot take into account ③ characteristics of places of origin and destination, or of migrants, that could influence both the volume and direction of movements.

"Lee's Theory of Migration"

According to E. Lee (1965), the decision to migrate and the process of migration is determined by the following four factors :-

i) Factors associated with the area of origin :- In each area there are several factors which motivate migration to outside area.

ii) Factors associated with the area of destination :- More attractive forces of the destination increase migrant selectivity : conversely stronger influence of repulsive forces at the destination reduces selectivity. Generally, the places with the most attractive forces have been a nation's metropolitan areas ; therefore these areas should also have the highest proportion of selectivity migrants.

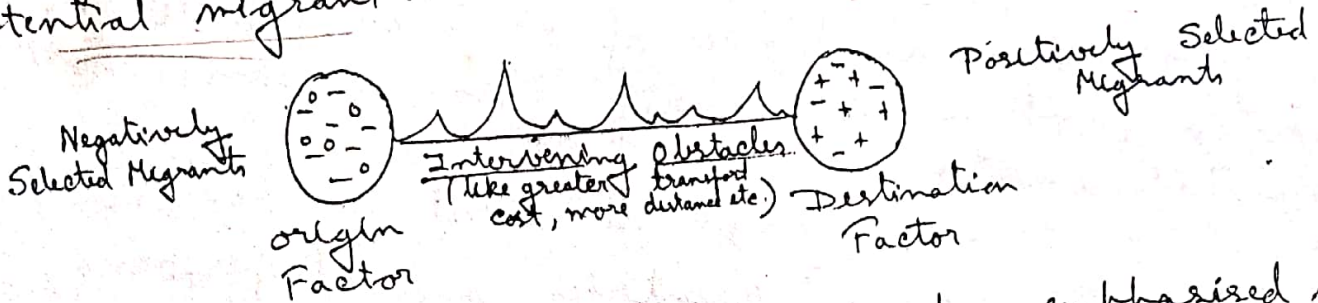
iii) Intervening obstacles :- Increased difficulty of intervening obstacles raises migrant selectivity. The most important intervening obstacles are distance and transportation. These have been considerably reduced in modern times due to technological advance.

iv) Personal Factors :- Lee's model focuses attention on individual behaviour and on the perceptions and decision-making process of the migrant. He developed a general scheme into which a variety of special movements can be placed. He categorizes forces exerting influence on migrant perception into "pluses" and "minuses". The former pull individuals towards them, the latter tend to drive them away. There are "zeros" also, in which the

competing
opposing forces are more or less evenly balanced.

Lee proposed a category of personal elements that includes age, education, sex and race, added to factors that are associated with the area of origin, the area of destination and intervening obstacles.

In this figure, pluses represent factors that hold and draw people, minuses factors that repel or push people from the area and zeros characteristics towards which people are indifferent. The effect of these forces vary according to personal qualities of the potential migrant.



In short, in the theory of migration, Lee has emphasised the role of pull factors or those associated with the destination areas, push factors or those associated with the areas of origin, intervening obstacles, such as ethnic barriers, distance and cost and personal factors.

Todaro's Model

M. P. Todaro (1976) has put forward the theory of perceived income and employment opportunities to explain migration. Other things remaining the same, prospects of higher income in the urban areas promote migration towards the cities. This is how he sums up four major features of his model :-

i) Migration is stimulated primarily by rational economic considerations of relative benefits and costs, mostly financial, but also psychological.

ii) Rural-urban migration depends on the probability that an urban labourer can successfully find a modern-sector job as well as, on the ~~urban~~ urban-rural income differential. Migration is then a response to expected rather

than actual earnings.

iii) The probability of rural-urban migration is directly related to the perceived rural-urban income differential and the probability of obtaining a job in the city, (However) Costs of moving reduce the probability of migration.

iv) Migration rates in excess of urban job opportunity growth rates are not only possible but also rational and probable (in the face of continued positive urban-rural expected income differentials). High rates of urban unemployment are therefore inevitable outcomes of the serious imbalances of economic opportunities between urban and rural areas of most under-developed countries.

Though the model has been empirically tested in a number of countries, and it performs fairly well with both aggregate census and survey data, it suffers from the following weakneses: ① It is based on the wrong assumption that all potential migrants have equal information about the urban labour market and have equal access to urban jobs. ② This model is partial because it doesnot emphasise the role of non-economic factors in the mobility decisions.

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