

# SSH362: Urban Space and Political Power

## Monsoon 2021, IIIT Delhi

### Project Report

#### **Topic:- Migration comparison study between Sitamarhi and Muscat**

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#### **Introduction**

This is a project report highlighting the major pull and push factors comparing two diagonally opposite regions of the world. We've carried out a critical comparison between Sitamarhi, a lower-tier agricultural district in the state of Bihar, 40 kilometres shy from the border of Nepal; versus Muscat, a beta global port city in the Middle East. Emigration isn't new to Indians, likewise, migration isn't new at all to citizens of lower-tier regions wanting to gain better economic opportunities in metropolitan cities. The middle east, which already held a religious attraction, historically prompted Muslim Devotees towards Saudi Arabia. Gradually, this pilgrimage movement harboured attractive locations neighbouring Saudi Arabia offering prospective employment from the 80s. There has been an accentuated growth in Indian settlements across the gulf countries. Muscat diplomatically gained the most from this emigrant movement and has ever since been a beacon for fostering a thriving communal and business activity across all religions. Sitamarhi, the birthplace of Goddess Sita, is a pilgrimage site for the select few Hindus worshipping her as a deity, but largely this district has been experiencing pro-migration in the last decade. This city most recently experienced massive reverse migration at the height of the COVID pandemic, where most peripheral workers had to move back to their native places owing to loss of employment in cities. We've inferred from recent developments in the news as well as carried our own data analysis through surveys supported by google forms for those computer literates, followed by focused group discussions as well as personal interviews. We've further substantiated our research through a python code analysis as well.

#### **Research Question**

While our main research theme question was a migration comparison study between Sitamarhi and Muscat, we also explored whether seeking the political nature of the region and its urbanity contributed to an individual's motivations for migration. This was specific to emigrants to Muscat

where the motivation for a taste of urban life was relevant but its political nature was a topic of debate for many. Migrants moving out of Sitamarhi were mostly motivated by the desperation of seeking better economic opportunities, and a quest for political participation didn't seem all that relevant for Sitamarhi.

## Methodology

### Method of Data Collection

Our data collection was both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data was procured through a series of focus-group discussions we've had with a couple of our neighbours. Further anecdotal data was collected through interviewing different individuals belonging to different social-economic backgrounds. We further used this qualitative data and drawing from our computer science expertise we developed a [python program](#), using which we supplemented our research with appropriate graphs and plots for the same. We've attached this python program as well as these plots along with our research document.

### Nature of Sample Size

Beginning our research we knew early on that there would be some element of bias in favour of economic opportunities. Yes, migration is naturally discussing the push and pull factors of an individual's natural inclination towards getting prospective economic opportunities in an urban city. Given, we were also keen on gathering thoughts on other abstract factors as well, like political governance etc. we judiciously chose subjects belonging to various age groups and picked their thoughts selectively on what they felt about such topics in question. Drawing from all, we were able to appropriately analyse why certain factors were sensitive to a particular age group. For both regions, we ensured impartiality by interviewing students aged between 20-24 predisposed towards seeking employment, as well as subjects belonging to an older age group aged between 35-45. In the case of Sitamarhi, we've interacted with subjects owning small and medium-sized businesses.

Over the course of this research, we learnt that at least 80% of the population of Sitamarhi is engaged and heavily dependent on agriculture. Drawing from that statistic, we interviewed a couple of peripheral workers engaged in seasonal employment in neighbouring states. Concerning Muscat, most of them were employed in well to do privately-held companies, as well as a few gig workers working under contract independent of their 9-5 jobs.

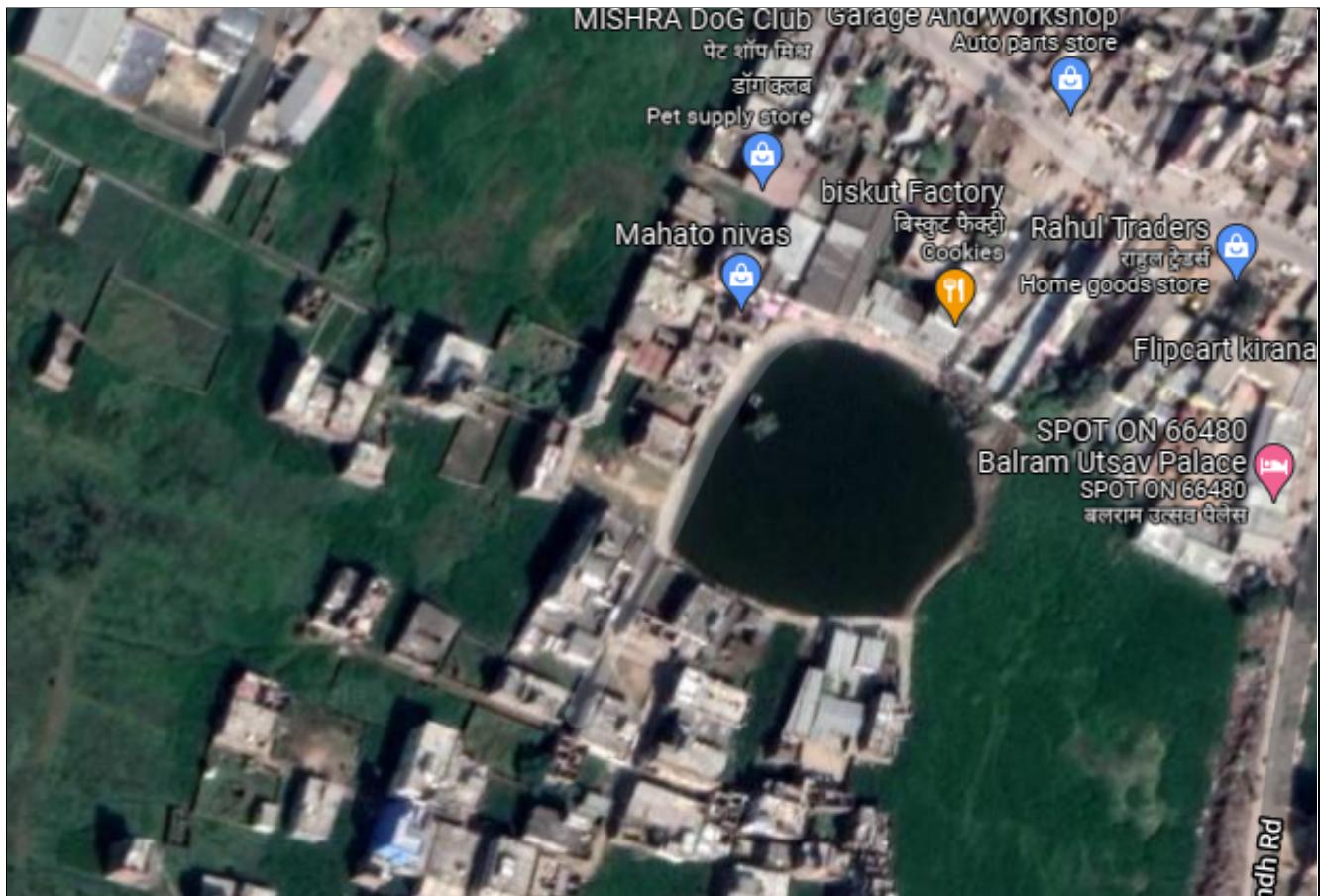
### Limitations of our design

One of the main limitations of our research methodology we identified very early on in our survey was whether our subjects would be able to decipher the question being asked or not. Knowing full well that 94% of the Sitamarhi population was rural and only a meagre percentage of this population was literate, thereby gathering relevant opinions was understandably hard. Some of the subjects haven't critically thought themselves whether migrating would be an option to secure economically rewarding labour. We had to adapt our questions in such a way that our focus groups with residents of Sitamarhi would be able to comprehend and opine on.

## Findings & Analysis

As previously highlighted, we've substantiated our research qualitative data analysis. Attached herewith are some of these findings appropriately represented in pie charts as well bar charts comparing multiple different factors. Adjacent to each of these pie charts comparing both the regions, we've added our analysis of the same.

### Locality of Sitamarhi:





## Locality of Muscat:





### Location Specific Questions:-

- Sitamarhi :

Question	Findings									
<b>Were you natively living in the town, or you moved here from the village?</b>	<p>A pie chart illustrating the responses to the question about native residence. The chart is divided into two segments: a larger brown segment labeled "Yes" and a smaller orange segment labeled "No". The "Yes" segment represents 66.67% (16) of the respondents, while the "No" segment represents 33.33% (8).</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>66.67%</td><td>(16)</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>33.33%</td><td>(8)</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Count	Yes	66.67%	(16)	No	33.33%	(8)
Response	Percentage	Count								
Yes	66.67%	(16)								
No	33.33%	(8)								

**Would you migrate in the coming years?**

Yes

66.67%  
(16)

33.33%  
(8)

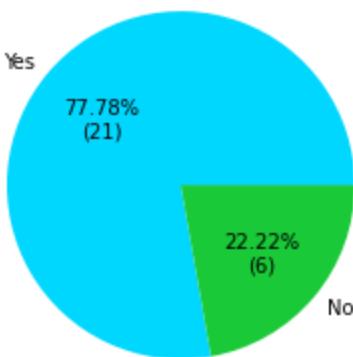
No

Judging from our own personal inferences, we expected that the majority of people would have moved here from their respective villages. Our findings confirmed this speculation, showing that close to 70% of people have moved here from their respective villages within Sitamarhi. Given, Sitamarhi isn't classified to be urbanised enough so there was a natural inquisitiveness to enquire whether they would be further migrating to other urban cities like Delhi/Patna or not. The above statistic proves a strong motive to move out of Sitamarhi as well.

- **Muscat :**

Question	Findings				
<b>Muscat is gradually urbanizing, but not as quick as becoming a cosmopolitan city like Dubai, would this influence your decision to remain in Muscat?</b>	<table> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>77.78% (21)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>22.22% (6)</td> </tr> </table>	No	77.78% (21)	Yes	22.22% (6)
No	77.78% (21)				
Yes	22.22% (6)				

**Do you feel equally confident in the new ruler as compared to the last president?**

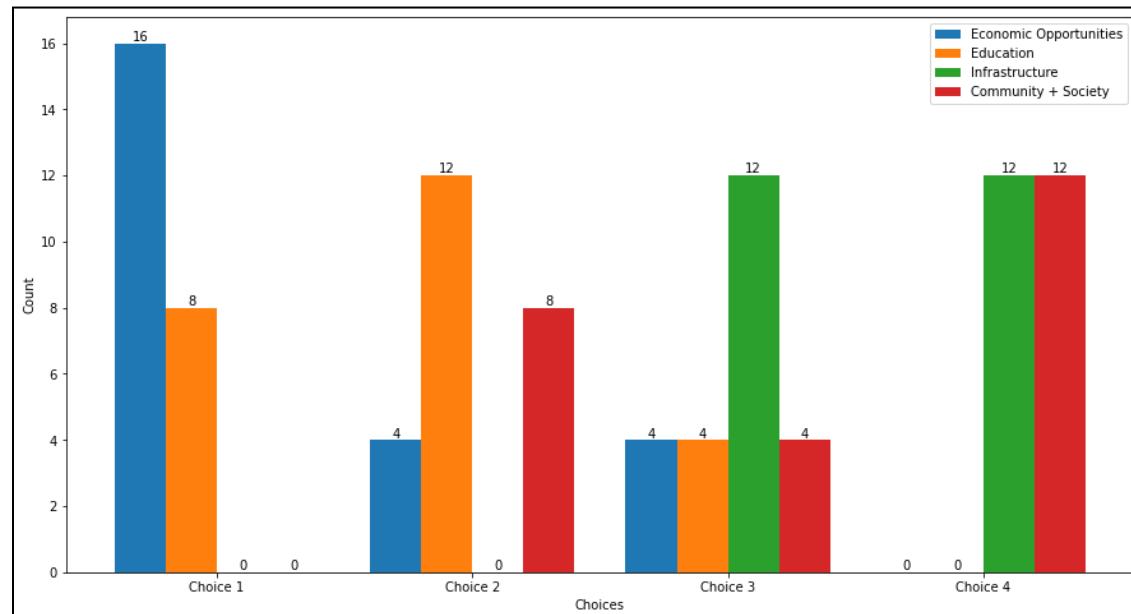


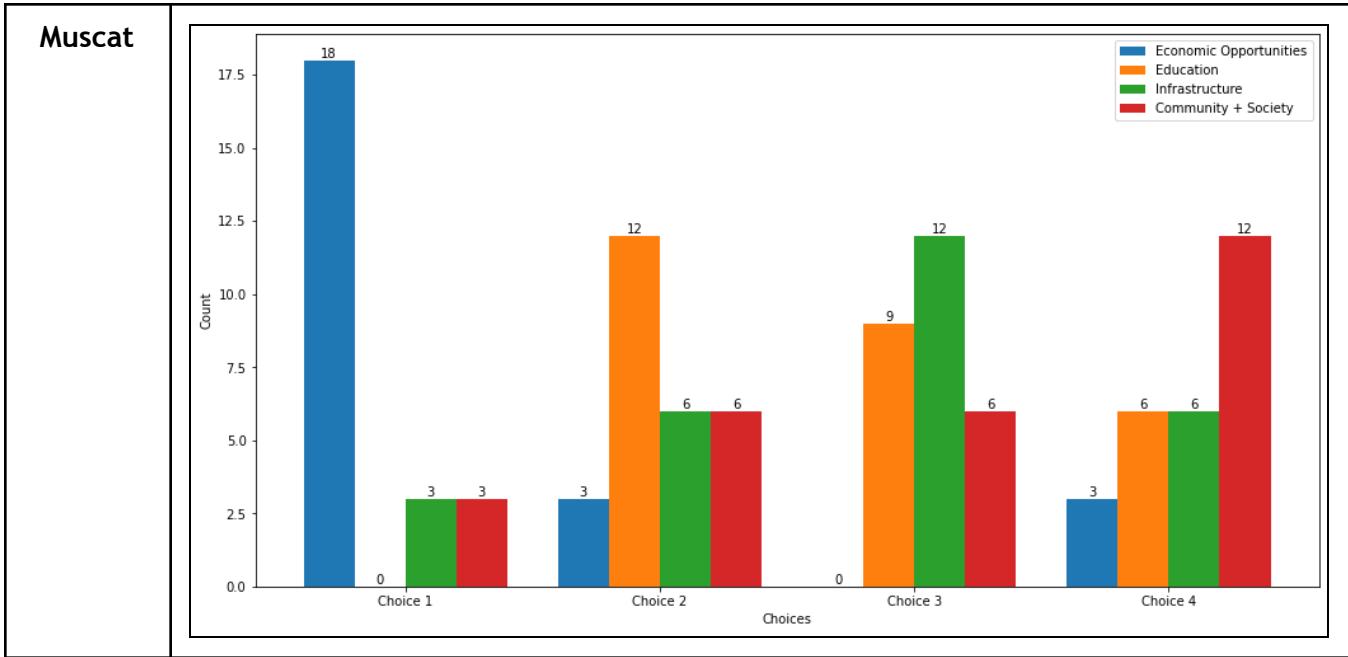
Knowing prior hand that there needed to be certain questions specific to Muscat, we've designed a couple of questions targeting the political inclinations of the city. Oman most recently observed the crowning of the new Sultan, under who enjoys good favorability among the emigrant population as well as per the given statistics. Muscat, also beaconing as one of the safest cities to live in the world, likewise enjoys strong popularity among previously living and prospective emigrants into the country.

#### Common Questions:-

**Question - What would be the order of preference of the following aspects - Economic Opportunities, Education, Infrastructure, Community + Society?**

**Sitamarhi**

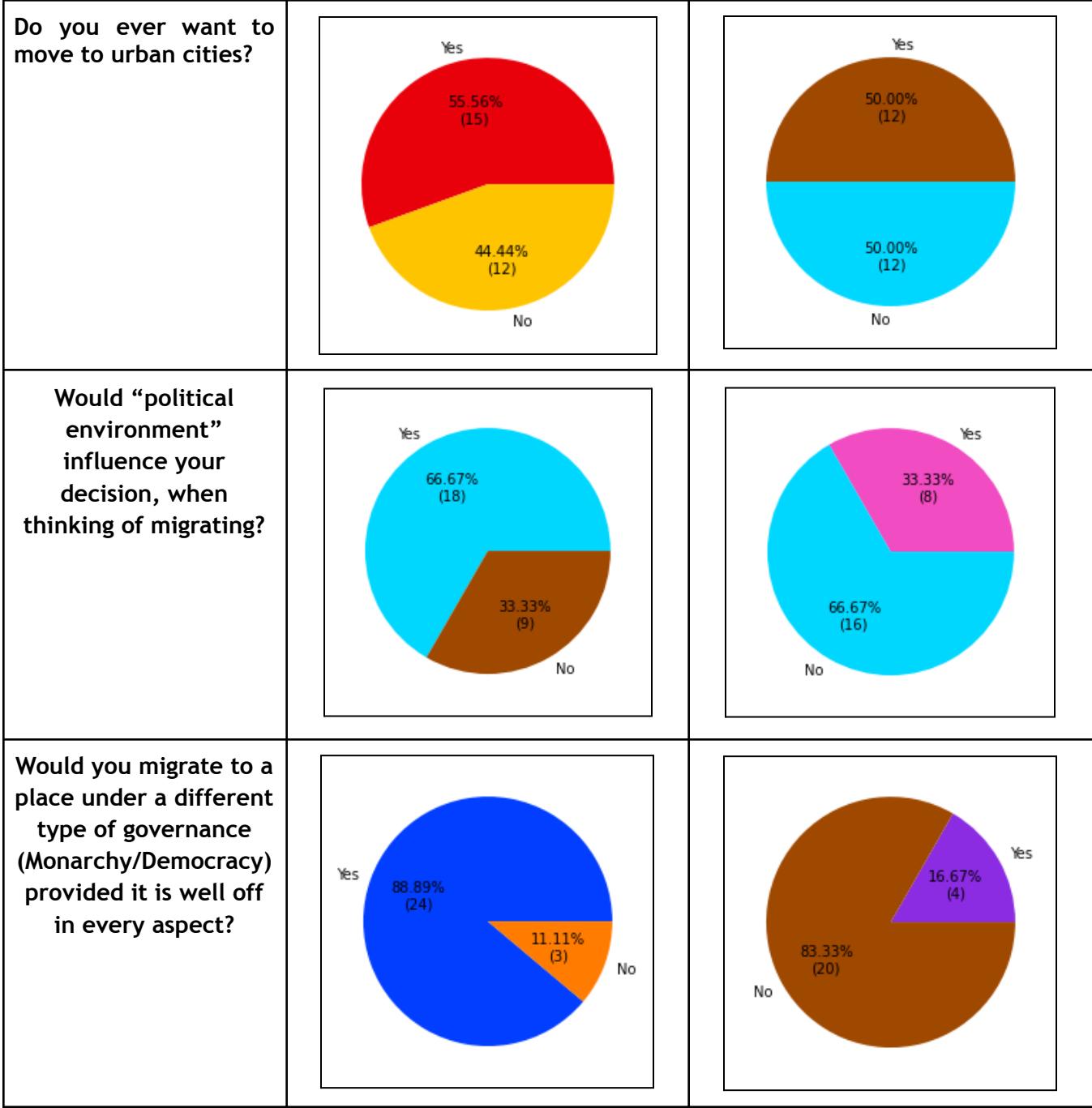


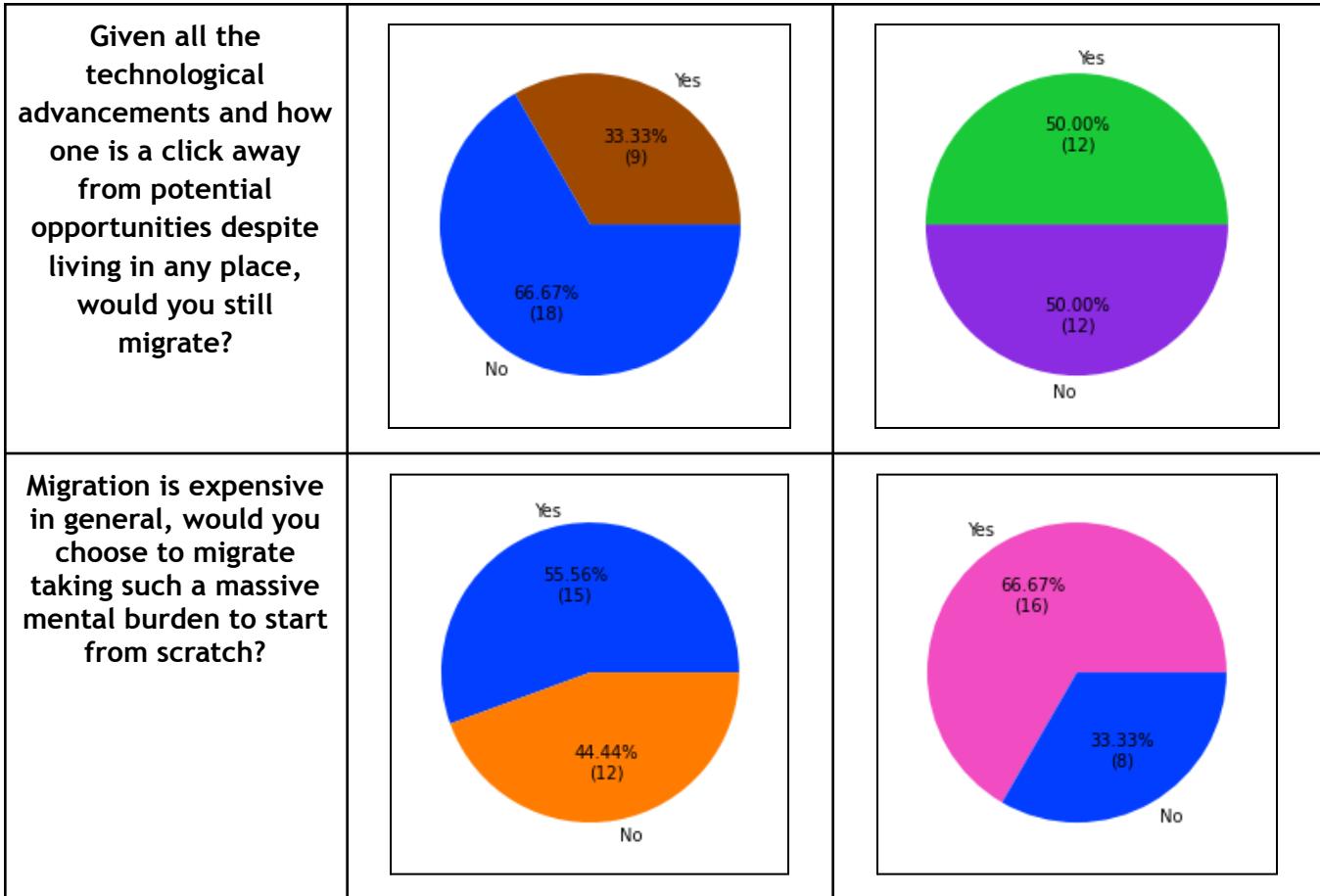


Given the nature of the discussion at play here, economic opportunities among all those surveyed remain the top priority for all migrants immaterial of location. Followed by equal parity in terms of education, infrastructure, and community. Education is most evidently a popular 2nd choice among subjects of Sitamarhi, and this can be attributed to the fact that there are still very few good educational bodies in Sitamarhi responsible for generating meritorious jobs for graduates.

The table below is illuminating some of the most important case points of comparison between both the cities followed by their analysis.

Question	Muscat	Sitamarhi
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## Further Analysis & Conclusions

Coming to the question of whether the localities people would want to move to an urban city, a similar response was obtained in both the localities. While there was an equal divide between the people of Sitamarhi, slightly more people(56%) in Muscat found themselves moving to an urban city in the future. Most of these emigrants preferring to move towards better places ( Dubai, Abu Dhabi ) were eager to secure a decent paycheck towards the end of their careers. Also, there is an overwhelming disappointment among emigrants of Muscat, where securing a permanent residence hasn't been allowed yet owing to Oman's historical conservatism towards preserving the religious culture and traditions.

Given the contrasting political nature of both of the cities, we were drawn to people's motivations if the political environment would be influencing their decision of migrating. Most citizens of Sitamarhi opined that the political parties at play in Sitamarhi only existed on paper, and not surprisingly 67% of our subjects did not deem it to be a deciding factor. Unlike Muscat, the reverse was the case, with 67% of people finding the political environment a deciding factor; for some economic growth is directly linked to the political environment. Most emigrants to Muscat felt responsible to have a say in being active political participants in the same country they are paying taxes to. Adding to growing disappointment in not being able to settle down for good in the country, the only hope for most emigrants is mandating a govt policy where these migrants could settle down, at least if they are not given the chance to participate in the political affairs of the region.

An important question of our study was to check whether living in Monarchy and Democratic countries impacts the people's perception towards the other mode of governance. In the Democratic Sitamarhi, very few people found themselves good with migrating to a place run by Monarchy. With almost all of the respondents connecting Monarchy with no free will and lack of sense of inclusiveness, which to them is very important, with a few even calling it anarchy. Whereas in the Monarchical Muscat people about 90% of people from sample space have no issues with Democracy and the only concern for them is the political stability of the place. As previously mentioned, being political participants in the same country being employed in seemed to be one of the main motivations of most emigrants.

Given the technological advancements and how the world has become a smaller place owing to ease of connectivity across various corners of the globe, we were intrigued to ask people their opinions on this very subject. We asked the people if due to the reach and usefulness of technology they would still want to migrate. In Sitamarhi there were mixed reactions with people being equally agreeing and disagreeing with it. An important thing to note here would be although people of Sitamarhi use digital payment apps like Paytm, etc, the city itself does not find it to be very techy-friendly. The usability of these tech devices was inclined towards leisure purposes and given less industrial infrastructure in this region, there was absolutely no incentive to use them for business purposes. Coming to Muscat about 67% of people accept that they would not migrate given the right technology. Knowing full well the benefits one entails to like improvement in the quality of living etc, most emigrants prefer enjoying these facilities as among the several perks of earning well in the Gulf. Likewise, most tech users in the gulf are also technologically literate and are active participants in the latest tech products releases. A common trait we noticed was how both subjects of Sitamarhi and Muscat were pro-migration, unlike constant engagement in technology which left Physical Connectivity missing. A sentiment motivated by lack of connectivity owing to the ongoing pandemic.

Our concluding topical question surrounded that return on investment towards migration. Judging from our own personal inferences respectively, we were curious pertaining to what incentivizes an individual choice towards migration despite being highly expensive. We've obtained favourable responses from both cities, being aware of the overwhelming positives of migrating to a better place. Moreover, these challenges as subjects of both these cities would opine are part of the territory and won't persist for a long time.

## Final Thoughts

For the last several decades the rhetoric towards migration has largely been influenced by an individual's or a community's quest for seeking better economic opportunities in bigger urban cities. What felt relevant to the case of Sitamarhi where peripheral migration was important to the individual for gaining sufficient monetary funds to send back to one's family roughly played the same degree of semblance for someone based out of Muscat as well. Subjects of both these cities were incentivised by economic opportunities, and the statistics don't lie. We opined that there were different dynamics of migration at play in the case of Sitamarhi, which we were keen to observe in depth. Not only has it been a place from where people move out in search of better opportunities, but it also acts as a place of hope for people belonging to nearby villages. We would like to establish

that there were indeed several layers at the epicentre of Sitamarhi. Judging by the discussions we've had with our subjects, we see that Sitamarhi has been successful in acting out as a mediating city for agricultural labourers seeking employment in more ambitious cities like Patna, Delhi. Initial hiccups in the development of our research were conversing with subjects of Sitamarhi, where one of us had to speak the local dialect (Maithili), an interesting experience indeed. Likewise in the case of Muscat, but what did surprise us was how politically inclined emigrants of Muscat intended to be. Lack of political participation at the cost of good economical opportunities certainly had a role to play in with respect to the free speech component for the subjects of Muscat. Bearing in mind that Autocratic rule does not promote free speech and democratic activity at all in this region.