



Deprivation of Women Migrants: A Case Study of Titagarh, Municipality, North 24 Pargana, West Bengal

KEYWORDS

Migrants, Disparity, Push-Pull factor, Place of Destination

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ABSTRACT : This paper is based on a sample study of migrant workers from Bihar to Titagarh, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. It highlights the trends, patterns and nature of gender disparity that exists between male and female migrants. Titagarh has been acting as a 'sponge' absorbing huge migrants over decades. Titagarh has been selected as the study area because huge migration has taken place here from Bihar and Andhra Pradesh for employment in jute mills and paper mills. Bihari migrants have been considered for the study because gender discrepancy has been more among Bihari migrants. Study has been conducted in Ward no 19, 20, 21 due to domination of Bihari migrants in these three wards. To identify the crisis of female migrants three parameters have been considered-educational attainment, workforce participation and health status. Women migrating from Bihar face the 'dual identity crisis' -being firstly a female gender and secondly as a migrant. This paper will conclude that although the female migrants avoid hunger, starvation and death by the process of migration from rural Bihar to an Urban agglomeration but their identity from gender perspective is at stake even in an urban setting like Titagarh.

Introduction: Migration means the movement of people from one place to another, which is permanent in nature and different in mobility than commutation. Migration is a natural human impulse-to move for something better- better employment, better living standards, better educational and health facilities etc. However with the era of globalization and concentration of industries in urban areas migration has often been driven by economic motives. Many scholars argue that migration was andocentric in nature but now women are equally migrating for sustenance. Transformation of occupational structure, greater pressure of feeding the family members, change in mode of production and poverty has compelled women to join the migrant streams from rural to urban areas. In India the migration trend from rural to urban areas has been mainly for economic reasons. Though such migration assures greater opportunity of livelihood it also leads to sense of loss, displacement, alienation and isolation. (Bhugra.D 2004). Women migrants are more prone to such identity crisis. This study does not intend to examine whether female migrants face assimilation or acculturation in place of destination, rather this study will portray that even in receiving areas Bihari female migrants are backward in literacy, occupation and health decisions. Education gives a person understanding and reasoning which the female migrants are lacking, occupation is still meager for them and hinders their economic and social empowerment and poor health status, which takes a toll on their body and mind. Poor health lessens the ability of women to cope with stress in a new environment. Although in this paper we have focused on conditions of female migrants but we could not avoid the reference of male migrants as disparity between sexes will portray the backwardness of female migrants better. Given the gender inequality in basic requirements of a quality life do the Bihari Migrant women really can establish their identity in a new place is a question that still remains unanswered?

Literature Review: Data gap about women migration and employment existed for a long time in Census and NSS giving a partial result about the pattern, trend and form of labour market. Male migration, in the absence of gender based data, was considered as the parameter of developmental discourse. NSS also failed to differentiate between women who migrated for work and those women who are working yet site marriage as their reason for migration. (Mazumder et.al 2013). In India women migration has been more

of dependent nature. Migration of women in India occurs due to marriage. Marriage leads to greater female migration but within short distances particularly intra district and inter district. Male migrate for long distances. Independent female migration is relatively lower. Almost 75% of female migration in India occurs due to marriage. (NSS 1999-2000).

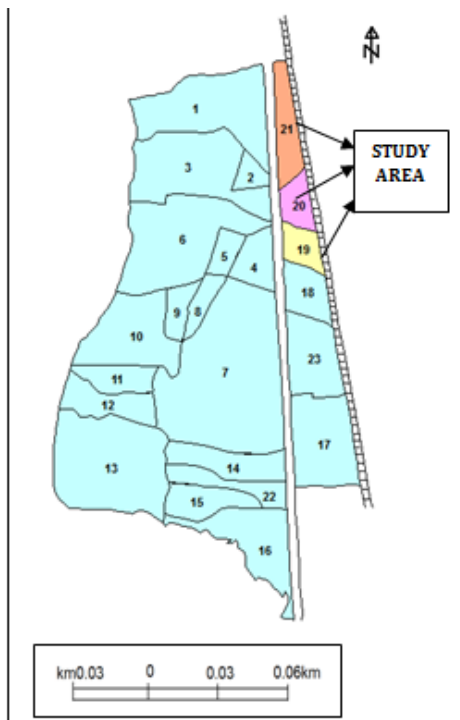
From 1980's female migration took place to metropolitan cities like Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. Tribal girls have started migrating alone and have become subject of exploitation by the employers. Too much work pressure, squalid living conditions and illness is making their life deplorable. They also have to face social exclusion in the village for ordinary illness which is often mistaken by villagers for cancer or aids. Tribal girls also face violence as they are sold to brothels by their families in the name of migration to work in large cities (Jha.V 2005).

Since women are confined to the household chores and their decision making in educational attainment was oblivious it also restricted their participation in the economic activity. For the same reasons the female migrants face problem in absorption in employment sectors in the place of destination as they fail to perceive employment as their priority. Integration in the new society by women migrants has been difficult. (Sundari, 2005a). Due to unfavourable conditions in the place of origin migration has increased in recent past and migration has been seen as a livelihood strategy by the males and less significantly by the females. Although women are migrating to various places with their husbands and seeking employment but there is clear disparity in occupation pattern, working conditions, living standards and educational attainment between genders. The absorption of women migrants to informal sector devoid of regular salaried jobs hint at this disparity (Sundari 2005b).

Migration has been a survival strategy in case of tribal women. Rao and Rana (1997) has studied the female migrants in Santal district of Bihar. They opined that extreme work pressure and decaying of local work options has compelled the females of these tribe to migrate over long distances particularly in Bardhaman District of West Bengal for work in cultivated land. Moreover the migration of male members of the family enhances the physical and financial burden of women left behind in the family. Over work takes a toll on their health

and indebtedness hinders educational attainment.

Study Area: Titagarh is an industrial area north of Kolkata. This area is characterized by increase in population due to labour migration. Titagarh is dominated and inhabited by migrants from other states due to the existence of jute mills and paper mill in this area. Titagarh has attracted migration from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh in the north and Andhra Pradesh and Orissa in the South. Migration is circular in pattern and migrants keep strong rural connection. In the past males migrated and wives were left in villages but later wives also moved with children to Titagarh. There is a sharp north south divide in workforce participation in Titagarh. While Bihari migrants didn't allow women to participate in work in mills the women from Andhra Pradesh did not face any objection in work participation (Haan.D.A 1997). Against this backdrop and splendid study by Haan three municipal wards -19,20 and 21 are selected for the survey. Selection of these wards was done on the basis of dominance of Bihari migrants in all the wards of Titagarh. Among these three wards ward 21 showed dominance of Bihari males, ward 19 showed dominance of Bihari muslims and ward 20 showed almost equal number of males and females.



(Map 1) Source: Primary Survey

YEAR OF MIGRATION OF MALE AND FEMALE MIGRANTS

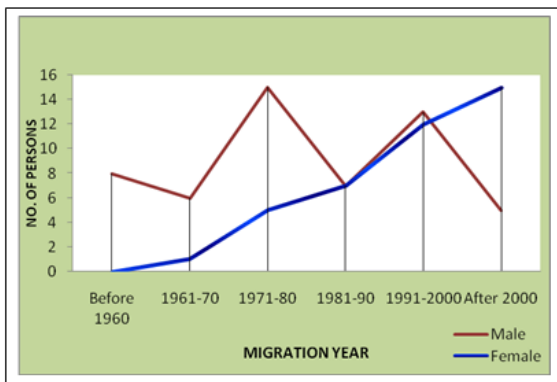


Fig. 1 Source: Titagarh Municipality

Objective of the study:

- To understand the pattern of migration of Bihari population to Titagarh.
- To observe the educational level of female Bihari migrants.
- To observe the occupational level of female Bihari migrants.
- To observe the health status of female Bihari migrants.

Methodology:

Data-The study has been conducted in three wards of Titagarh namely ward no 19, 20, and 21. Structured questionnaires were used for primary survey in these three wards. Purposive random sampling was done with hundred respondents. Respondents were divided equally into males and females who are migrants coming from various parts of Bihar. Secondary data was gleaned from Titagarh Municipality.

Methods: Cartographic and Statistical representation of the data both primary and secondary has been done to substantiate the theory with practical evidences on field.

Findings and Analysis:

Migration Decisions: The major migration push factors of females have been marriage. Table 1 shows in the study 76% of female migrants migrated due to marriage. Migration decision has been mainly of their husbands. 8% of the female migrants moved for lack of livelihood sources. A negligible percentage of them migrated for loss of lands and transfer of their husband's job. In case of male migrants 77% of migration was due to lack of employment. 7% migrated due to job transfer and rest for loss of land in Bihar. The push factor of the Bihari females and males has been totally different. While females migrated for marriage, males migrated for lack of employment. The migration decision of females is dominated by their male counter parts. After reaching Titagarh some female migrants have started working as casual labours. Women here face the camouflaged migration where it's difficult to differentiate between marriage and labour migration (Majumder. I).

The pull factors of migration are different for female and male migrants. 78% of female migrants migrates due to available family contacts in Titagarh. They keep more contact with relatives and kins in Titagarh so that they can easily find support and shelter during crisis. 64% of males migrate to Titagarh due to favourable employment opportunities in jute mills, paper mills, plastic factories. Some work as daily labours in construction sites and as rickshaw pullers and auto drivers (Table 2). Thus the push and pull factors of migration is completely different for male and female migrants.

Table 1: Migration Push Factors-Ranking by Female and Male Migrant Respondents

Push Factors	% of Female Migrants	Rank	% of Male Migrants	Rank
Marriage	76	I	-	-
Education	-	-	5.71	III
Social Tension	-	-	1.43	V
Lack of Employment	8	II	77.14	I
Loss of Land	4	III	4.29	IV
Family Problems	8	II	4.29	IV
Transfer	4	III	7.14	II

Table 2: Migration Pull Factors- Ranking by Female and Male Migrant Respondents

Pull Factors	% of Female Migrants	Rank	% of Male Migrants	Rank
Employment Arranged	-	-	28	II
Favourable Job	6	III	64.29	I
Family Contacts	78	I	2.86	IV
Social Contacts	10	II	-	-
Educational Opportunities	4	IV	4.29	III
Familiarity with City	-	-	-	-
Social Status Assured	-	-	-	-

Source: Primary Survey

Trends and Pattern of Migration: Migration from Bihar has been extremely prominent in Titagarh area particularly from the rural districts. The major causes of migration in Titagarh have been the demand of low cost labours to work in the jute and paper mills. The drought prone areas of Bihar and failure of crop in persistent years have been the major cause of migration to this place. In our study area the male migration has shown a higher trend of migration from 1970-1980 just after independence from east Pakistan. However male migration has witnessed a declining trend after 2000.. Male migrants are now migrating to Kerela and Karnataka where the wage level is higher than these mills in Titagarh. Male migration from Titagarh to other States has led to rise in female migrant population in Titagarh since males prefer to migrate alone and the family is left behind. Thus in ward number 20 and 21 the dominance of female migrants have occurred but in ward 19 both male and female migrants have shown declining trend in migration. There seems to be inverse relationship between out migration and regional development hence greater job opportunities in other metropolitan areas are attracting the migrants of Titagarh. (Fig 1).The families in Titagarh have large number of family members. When the male members are migrating from Titagarh to other areas the younger females are taking up works to sustain their family but they are not allowed to take decision about family expenditure. Though she is pushed to work all household decisions are taken by elder members like father in laws who stay behind in the family.

Demographic Profile: The age sex pyramid of Bihari migrants in Titagarh shows the dominance of people in the age group of 20-50.(fig 2)This ascertains that the independent population that contributes most to the working age group has migrated to Titagarh in search of livelihood. Both male and female migrants are maximum in the age group of twenty to thirty but males in this age group are more in comparison to females. The dominance of youth population depicted in the pyramid also hints at the high fertility rate among Bihari migrants in Titagarh. Caste wise distribution of migrant population has been shown with the help of Lorenz curve.(fig3) The curve shows that the scheduled tribe Bihari migrants are equally distributed in migrant society than the scheduled caste migrants. The Scheduled caste migrant women are scattered throughout the region as they are volatile while finding jobs, scheduled tribe migrant women on the other hand live in a ghetto like form and don't migrate easily. Number of family members is relatively high. 56% of female migrants have family members between 3 to 6 family members and 30% of female migrants have family members between 6 to 9.

AGE SEX PYRAMID OF MIGRANT BIHARI POPULATION

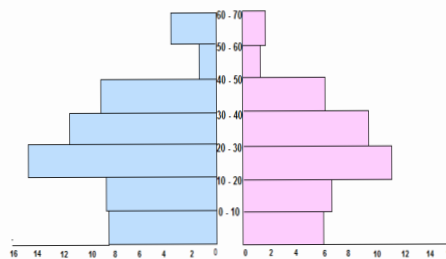


Fig 2

LORENZ CURVE SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT SC AND ST POPULATION TO TOTAL POPULATION

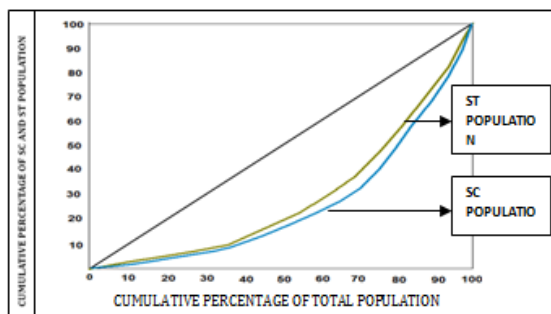


Fig 3

Source: Primary Survey

Age of marriage has also been considered as an important factor in demographic profile of migrants because marriage has been a determining factor of women migration to Titagarh. Moreover age of marriage also determines the reproductive period of a woman and also her maternal health. While females get married in a very early age males get married at a relatively later age. In our sample study 85% of females get married at the age below 14 while 58% of males get married in the age between 20-30.

Level of Educational Attainment: The Population Commission of the United Nations considers the ability to both read and write a simple message with understanding in any language a sufficient basis for classifying a person as literate(UNESCO, 1961).Schooling is important for a person to learn reading and writing. In our study 65% respondents are literate while 35% are illiterate however when compared to the municipal average the literacy of the Bihari migrants are low than the entire population. Poverty, low socio-economic levels and social taboos are mainly responsible for lack of consciousness about education particularly among the female migrants.

Literacy Level- 36% of females are literate compared to 42% of males and 15% females are illiterate compared to 10% illiterates in males. Field survey also reveals that there are no literates above the age of 50 and there are no illiterates below the age of ten. This situation hints about the increasing consciousness of young generations about the need of education hence they send their children to school while older generations lack the urge.

School Attendance- In case of school attendance the male children are more compared to female children. Government initiatives like mid-day meal and Sarva Siksha Abhijan are initiated in this area but girl children leave school before completing their primary education. Girls enroll in primary standards but they often drop out due to lack of financial support from the family and for helping their mothers in household

chores and taking care of their siblings (fig 4)
Age of marriage is also a crucial determinant of educational attainment of migrant girls. Earlier in this paper we have discussed about the age of marriage of Bihar migrants. The relation between age of marriage and educational attainment shows a positive correlation. As the age of marriage increases among girls they attain higher education but the scatter diagram shows the dominance of marriage between 10 to 20 is more.(fig 5)

EDUCATION LEVEL OF FEMALE MIGRANTS

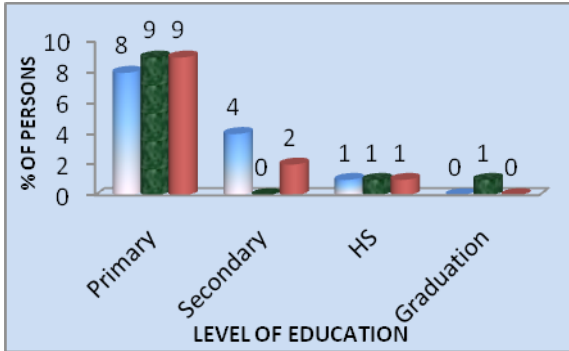


Fig 4

SCATTER DIAGRAM SHOWING RELATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND AGE OF MARRIAGE

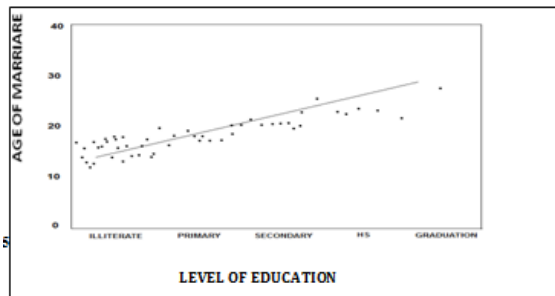


FIG 5

Source: Based on Primary Survey

Scenario of Employment:

Work Participation Rate- determines the economic empowerment of a person if not completely then partially. According to census of India any person whose main activity was participation in any economic productivity either by his physical and mental activities is classified as worker. The formula for calculation of Work Participation Rate is $WPR = (\text{Total working population} / \text{total population}) \times 100$. In the three wards of our study while males have 96% work participation rate females have only 26% work participation rate. Ward no 20 shows work participation rate as low as 11% although maximum female migrants live in this ward .89% of the families are reluctant in sending female members to work .While 85% of female migrants are working to sustain their family because the males have migrated to other places, other 8% female migrants are widow.(Map2 and Map3)

Occupational Pattern of Female Migrants:

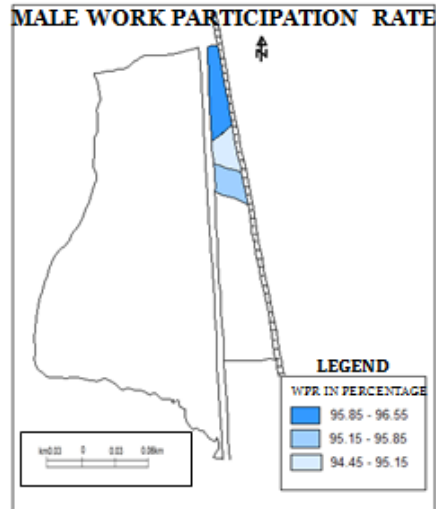
Study of nature of work of female migrants show a dismal picture. Casual wage employment has risen and 100% female migrants work as casual workers. Not a single female migrant is working as self employed or regular salaried worker. The occupational pattern of female migrant's father or husband shows that 10% of males work as regular workers and 79% casual workers,11% are self employed. The women face difficulty in regular or self employed jobs because of illiteracy and lack of skill.

Earning Differentials-

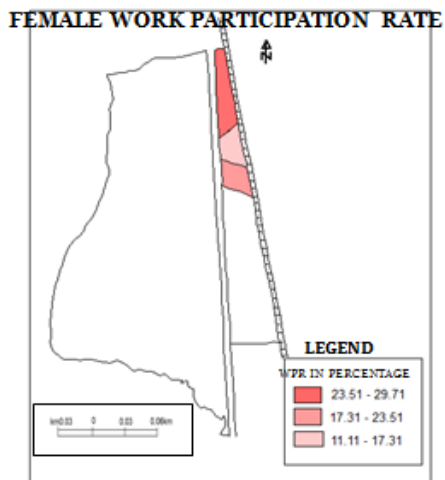
The earning level of women is important in determining her status and role in household economy but also to establish her identity in the family. The female migrants working as casual labours in plastic factories, jute mills and health centres earn up to Rs 5000, those working as domestic servants get up to rupees 500. The male migrants earn between 5000 and 10000 rupees and a very less number earn above 10000. Thus out of the total migrant population, male migrants are the active population who also sustain their family economically while the females are mostly dependent population who depends on their husbands or other male members of the family for survival.(fig6).Earning differentials among female migrants is due to their illiteracy, lack of skills, lack of experience and casual nature of their jobs.

Problems Faced by Female Migrants at Worksite-

Since female migrants work only as casual workers at construction site, plastic factories, jute mills or domestic servants so often their wage are cut for taking leave. Often they are terminated from jobs due to absenteeism. Some are paid less than their counter parts. No holidays or medical benefits are provided to the female workers. Lack of bargaining skill and lack of knowledge about wage rates in new area makes it easier for the employers to exploit them. A major hindrance in finding job for the female migrants is ignorance about local language.



Map 2



Map3
Based on Primary Survey

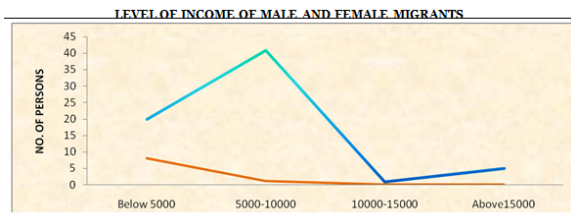


Fig 6
Based on Primary Survey

Health Status of Female Migrants: We have considered some factors like last physical examination done by the female respondents, place of child delivery, and medical institutions availed and male perception about women health to understand whether the female migrants had the decisive role in decision making about their health. It is really depressing that the health status of females are very deplorable just like their educational and employment scenario. Three medical institutions were considered mainly Government, private nursing home and SI department. 75% of the women go to Government hospitals, 19% go to private clinics and only 6% avail SI department (fig 7). The maternal section of Titagarh municipal hospital is in a very deplorable condition. Patient intake capacity is very low and mostly they cater to the needs of child birth. Most females lack pre natal, post partum and general treatment.

Primary survey reveals that Bihari females had experienced last physical examination between previous 2 to 5 years (fig 8). Child delivery takes place mostly in municipal hospital of Titagarh due to poverty and higher cost of delivery and treatment in nursing homes hinting at the poor socio-economic condition of the females but what is surprising is that in an urban area like Titagarh 19% of child birth still takes place at home (Map 4). The main cause behind this is restriction of family members for sending women to hospitals for institutional delivery. Many females are unaware of 3 ante natal checkups. The higher risk of maternal deaths persist among female migrants as they lack the decision making regarding their health status. Males members of the family are mostly unaware of various health care delivery systems and health facilities provided by the Government hospitals and NGOs. (fig 9) for the women.

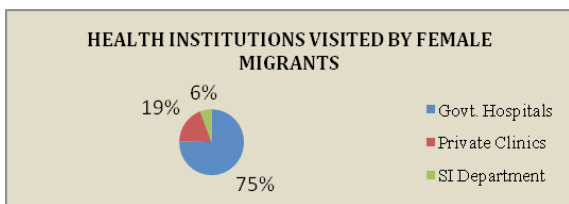


Fig 7

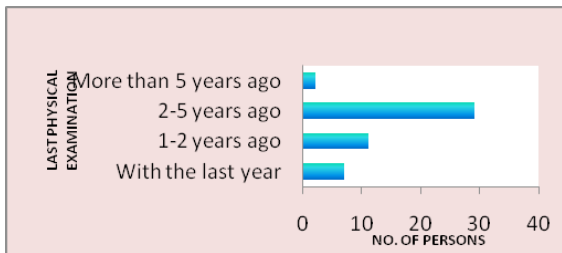


Fig 8

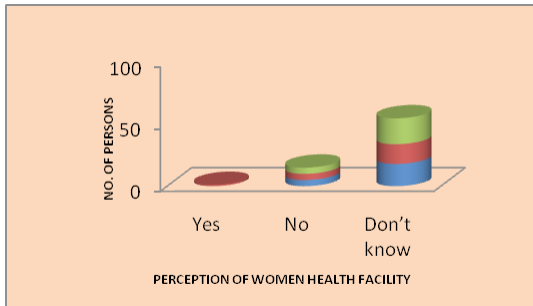
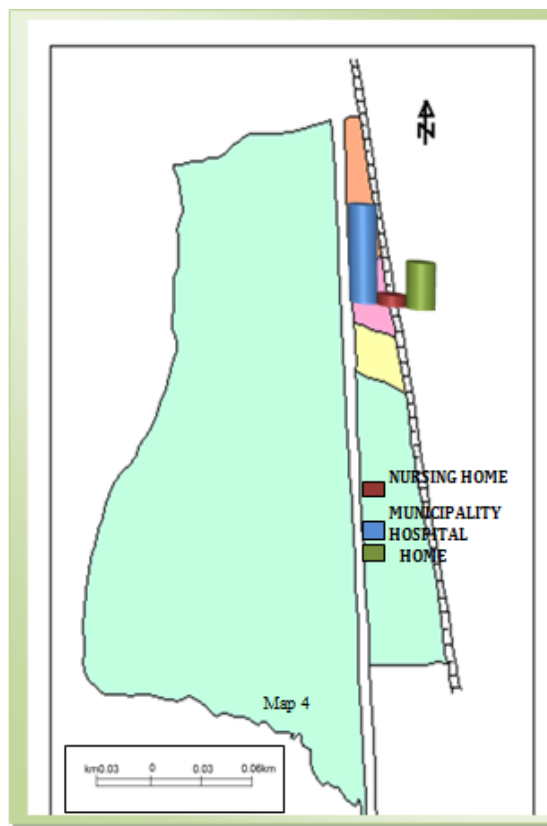


Fig 9 PERCEPTION OF WOMEN HEALTH FACILITY FROM MALE
Based on Primary Survey

PLACE OF CHILD DELIVERY



Map 4

Conclusion: The female migrants in Titagarh face exploitation, suppression and identity crisis from two aspects. One being a female gender whose vital decisions are taken by the male members in every phase of life and also as a female migrant who face identity crisis in a completely new urban environment. This has been shown with the help of a Chart(1). The study of Migrant women in Titagarh reveals that their situation was deplorable in original place and the scenario has not changed much in the new area, though their aspirations were positive. The educational, employment and health status which are considered as the three vital pillars of development shows a dismal picture. Thus in perspective of human development which embraces better quality of life with access to basic necessities, migration cannot be considered promoting human development.

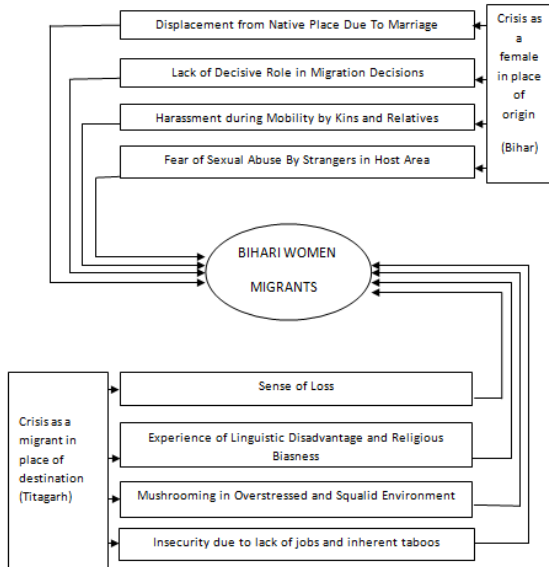
The intangible crisis of migrant women in Titagarh are the sense of being lost, lack of confidence, agony of displace-

ment, loss of property and land in native place which can only be felt and cannot be recorded as data or document.

Migration is a process that cannot be stopped because migration is perceived as a source of livelihood by the rural population. Hence the condition of migrants must be looked

upon with compassion and sufficient measures must be taken to improve the educational, employment and health scenario. If these three indicators of development are assured to the female migrants in Titagarh, gradually they will be able to get out of their identity crisis.

Chart:1 Crisis at Every Step of Migration of Bihari Women



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