

A Case Study Report On Women's Migration From Rajnagar Block, Kendrapada District, Odisha, To A Garment Factory In Kerala During The COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In recent years, Kerala has witnessed a significant influx of migrant workers from across India. Attractive wages, ample employment opportunities, and a shortage of local labor have made the state a favorable destination—particularly for workers from economically vulnerable regions. During the nationwide lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of these migrants faced immense challenges. Approximately 9,000 workers from Odisha, especially from the Kendrapada district, were stranded in Kerala's Ernakulam district, desperately seeking ways to return home. Among them were around 151 women employed at the Garment Factory (Odisha Women, 2021).

*This study focuses on the migration experience of women from the **Rajnagar block of Kendrapada district** to KERALA during the pandemic. It provides an in-depth understanding of their socio-economic conditions, working environments, exploitation, and the hardships endured during the lockdown. Using a **case study approach**, four detailed interviews were analyzed to explore the **gendered dimension of labor migration**, issues of health, wage disparity, work conditions, and post-pandemic recovery.*

*The report aims to contribute to policy discussions on **migrant labor rights**, women's employment in the informal sector, and the urgent need for protective labor regulations—especially during humanitarian crises like COVID-19.*

Keywords: Women migrants Labor, migration, KERALA Garment Factory, Odisha–Kerala migration, Kendrapada district, COVID-19 lock down, Exploitation and wage disparity

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I. Introduction:

Migration has become an integral part of India's labor landscape, with millions of workers moving from economically disadvantaged regions to urban and industrial hubs in search of better livelihoods. Kerala, in particular, has emerged as a major destination for migrant labor due to its higher wage levels, labor shortages, and expanding industries. Over the last decade, the state has attracted workers from states such as Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, filling critical gaps in its workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, exposed the precarious position of this vast migrant population. When the nationwide lockdown was imposed in March 2020, industries came to a sudden halt, leaving workers stranded without wages, shelter, or transport to return home. Kerala, despite its relatively strong welfare measures, witnessed large-scale distress among migrants. Among the affected were nearly 9,000 workers from Odisha, many of them concentrated in Ernakulam district. Of this group, around 151 women employed in the KERALA Garment Factory were left particularly vulnerable (Odisha Women, 2021).

This study focuses on women migrants from the Rajnagar block of Kendrapada district, Odisha, who were employed at KERALA during the pandemic. By drawing on four in-depth case studies, it explores their socio-economic backgrounds, migration journeys, working environments, and the challenges they faced during the lockdown. The analysis highlights the gendered dimension of migration, with specific attention to wage disparities, health vulnerabilities, workplace exploitation, and the struggles of post-pandemic recovery.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to foreground the voices of women migrant workers—an often-overlooked segment in migration discourse. Their experiences not only reflect the harsh realities of precarious labor in the informal sector but also underscore the urgent need for protective labor policies, gender-sensitive welfare programs, and effective crisis-response mechanisms. In doing so, the study contributes to broader debates on migrant rights, women's employment, and labor governance in the context of humanitarian crises such as COVID-19.

This study examines the experiences of women migrants from the Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district, Odisha, employed at the KERALA Garment Factory in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on four in-depth case studies, it captures their socio-economic conditions, workplace realities, and struggles during the lockdown. The findings reveal common themes of economic vulnerability, exploitative work conditions, wage disparity, poor access to health and social security, and acute hardships during the pandemic. Despite these challenges, the narratives also reflect resilience and the pursuit of recovery in the post-pandemic period. The study underscores the urgent need for stronger labor protections, gender-sensitive migration policies, and support systems for women workers during crises.

II. Case Study -01

Rasmita Pradhan(not real name) , aged 22, lived in the Pradhan sahi of the Rajnagar block from the Kendrapara district. As per her statement, Kerala is not a safety place, it's a dangerous place for survive especially for the girls (**Kerala vala nuha, khatarnak jaga**) but the place where they have been settled that place i.e KERALA Garment company was amazing with safety and security for the girls. As per company's rule they will not allow any employee or migrant worker to the outside without the security provision. The security guards are also divided into two different categories such as male security and female security. Both Male security and female security services provide to the male and female categories respectively. Most of the security guards are from Uttar Pradesh, Assam and also from Odisha who were working over there. If any kind of issues are faced by the migrant workers' then they will directly report to the lady security guards from their own community i.e Odia community. Apart from that, one of the welfare Sir was appointed above the security guard, whose work basically resolved the problems which faced by the migrant workers. If the security was unable to infringe the complaint then the independent migrant workers can report about the complaint to the welfare sir, who basically belongs from the Malayalam community.

Earlier Most of the employees in the KERALA Garments Company were from Malayalam religion people but subsequently it has been changed and covered by the migrant workers who are mostly from the Hindu religion. In the KERALA Garment Company, no one is there to bring out any of the workers. Rather, if the worker wants to leave his job then he can resign by following official rules and regulations. As per Rasmita's statement hostels services also provide as per the categorisation of the two different languages such as Hindi and Malayalam. That means all the Hindi spoken workers were staying in one hostel whereas Malayalam workers were staying in another hostel. This segregation has been followed by the company because both the people from the different communities were following different kinds of food habits, standard of living, and cultural values than the Hindi workers, she added.

Earlier, when the Rasmita was joined in the KERALA Garment Company, There were only the Malayalam people who worked but gradually it has been changed and the people from different places were joined and mostly from Odisha. It has a great impact on the changing in the ratio pattern of the involvement of the migrant workers in the Company. In the first phase of the joining, there was prepared food only based on the Malayalam style. When they were joined and simultaneously the Hindi spoken workers were raised and then the food habits and the preparation food became separate as the Malayalam food is different from the Hindi spoken workers' she added. Those migrant workers who are working in the KERALA Garment would not be able to meet the other members or relatives outside of the company. If the worker is wishing to meet her relatives then the relatives will come near the office along with her ID proof for verifying the member. (**Id dekhanti j tame sata kahucha ki aaau kie**). Because as the company would take the risk, therefore they are more focused on the document verification before giving the permission to the workers. When the workers were going outside, the security guard also went with them which makes the workers happy and feel secure in Kerala as we are unaware of most of the places. Therefore, the security guards guide them which makes it easier for them to walk outside. In a week, one day will be provided as a work holiday i.e Sunday. Apart from it, if the workers will take the two to three days leave including Sunday, the company will not deduct the money from the salary. The workers were working from 8 am to 5 pm in the evening but if there were lots of work pending then the workers were working overtime which was more than 2 hour per day.

The workers usually have 3 meals a day i.e morning, afternoon, evening and in the night which basically constitutes breakfast, lunch, evening snacks, and dinner respectively. In the evening, the company will provide us with tea and biscuits. For the food, they have been deducted Rs. 1000/-. As the Malayalam people as well as the Odia people from Odisha have the different rituals to worship their own god, therefore they never get forced to anybody to accept their rituals to worship the god instead of respecting each other's pattern of worship towards god. As per her statement, she visited the church during the period when she was working over there but never ate the Prasad as the Malayalam has the different kind of Prasad rather than Hindu so, never taste that Prasad.

During the period of living, she realised that equality is maintained at the workplace though we migrated from Odisha to Kerala but never felt like partiality. Doubtlessly, observed that, there was no caste discrimination among them. We were treated equally like their Malayalam people. Rasmita has not faced any kind of issues over

the workplace. She went there because, as per her statement, in her village most of the women and men were engaged in the agricultural sector rather than any other sector.

During the first phase of the Covid-19, when she returned her village by the help of the Sonu Soodh and then in the Rajnagar she was staying in a quarantine in a school, after quarantine completed when she reached her home, many of the villagers asked about the place i.e Kerala and its culture, heritage, pattern of life style, behavioural pattern etc. Apart from that, her friends' were more interested to know about the place and when Rasmita explained about the place, they went to Kerala and worked over there.

During Covid-19 about the food consumption, she stated that the company provided them food regularly and for that they have deducted money from our salary. Basically they have provided us with both non-vegetarian and vegetarian food. Non-vegetarian food includes chicken, Fish, egg etc. whereas in the vegetarian dish/ food, all the vegetables were cooked but one common vegetable that is Ash gourd was commonly cooked over there.. But it was decreased day by day, as the work process was temporarily shutted and they never predict that how long the COVID as the work process was halt. During this time, the workers were competing with each other for having their food like Puri, Upama, Maggie and noodles. But few days after, the worker were faced various issues related to Food.

About health provision in the company, she has mentioned that, if any of the employees' health condition will be worse then we will notify the welfare sir as well as security guard about the condition and they will take us to the hospital and the company will bear the expenses. We were only spending on our personal useful things. Apart from it, due to workload, sometimes headache, knee pain, which are regular health conditions found among the us because of weakness.

About Marriage custom, she has mentioned that, In Kerala there are no such mandatory rules that the Christian people can only to their same community, they can also marry from other communities as well. When she was again returned at the second time to work over there, her friends also went to Kerala to work at KERALA as their family was also struggling in a financial crunch. So Rasmita and her friends worked together at the same company. But due to urgency in the family, she has to return from Kerala to her Village but currently, her friends are working over there. As per her statement, her family members were looking for a bridegroom to marry her, therefore, she has returned to her village. She went to Kerala because her family's financial condition was not good, so she and her brother work in different sectors to continue their life pattern in a better way. When Rasmita was working at KERALA, her family members were worried as well as having a fearness of her, as she is a girl and from Odisha to Kerala is literally a long distance which became a factor for her parents' fearness.

After receiving skilled training on Eye check-up, she joined an eye hospital and currently, she is working in an eye hospital in Kendrapara, Her salary is basically Rs 8000/- in Indian currency. Basically, her work responsibilities are eye check-up through a digital eye-check-up machine, measuring the pressure point which is related to numerical value. Apart from her, one of her friends who is also a migrant returnee working in the same eye hospital in Kendrapara and her husband working as a labour in the different construction side by visiting different places from all over the states. As per Rasmita's statement, in her villages, a marriage expenses will be 16 lakh, though the bridegroom is not interested to take any kind of dowry or support but the family from bride side as per their own wish to provide minimum 50,000/- to the bridegroom as a dowry. Apart from it, they will give Gold to their daughter with high quality i.e 24 carat along with some material things. A grand celebration with food will be arranged during the process of marriage.

In addition, those who have gone to Kerala. They have gone earlier. Few of them has gone through block. Few of them are from this block as their relatives are staying over there and most of people from Rajnagar has been shifted to Kerala to work at different sector. During the COVID-19 when the migrants were returned to their villages, the local officials recorded their name and provided them with a quarantine facility with a purpose to not to spread the people among all the villagers. BDO commissioner Narayan Sethy Jena instruct to the local officials to record in BDO panel list of the migrant returnees which approximately 114 ladies who are came to their villages during COVID-19. The Recovery management were involved in this process to make a list of returnee. One development strategy was there. The record has been maintained in name, name of village, father's name, age. Gram Panchayat can give you the detail data of the returnee from Kerala Covid-19 returnee. It has been clearly mentioned in the Panchayat list those who are returnee. They have few stayed and returned back. They have been quarantined under the guidance GPO section. Migration is that those who go for work to Kerala, Karnataka. All of them not go for employment purpose.

As per her statement, few of them went through the government after they were skilled workers. Government of Odisha has two three routes for employment Mela, employment exchange of Kendrapada also sends girls and there are other people who go through their relatives. The Odisha government has hired many representative agencies through which people are skilled. There are 34 PI in Odisha. There are different PI for different trades. Some are hiring for textile, for hospitals. Most of the people who have gone to Kerala are from 3 Panchayats. During the COVID-19 the people from Odisha who were working at KERALA faced various issues like lack of work, food scarcity, a fear ness came into their mind due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 virus, and

not having transport facility to reach their home. Employees felt like prisoners. After facing lots of problems some of them were returned from KERALA.

Apart from it, the Sai export PIA Bhubaneswar gives employment outside Odisha. They have branches in Bangalore, Noida, and Faridabad for bonded girls. Mostly men go to Kerala, Tamilnadu for construction work. Many of the people from Odisha especially from Rajnagar block of Kendrapada district went to Kerala. In the Rajnagar block of the Kalahandi district, 90% of the people are coming under the Hindu category. From this approximately 20-30% people are from SC category especially Mallick caste, **(jahaku ame ame PANA kahu)** coming under the SC category. The washing community/ basandar community are called DHOBA and fishermen who have the surname as SETHY are also included in the Schedule Caste (SC) category. Those people are especially coming under Schedule caste (SC) category.

The percentage of the Schedule caste people is more than the others. Based on the response, Schedule Caste is not the dominant caste. The dominant people belong to the agricultural community, whose specialised livelihood pattern is based on agriculture and cultivation. If we will see in Delhi, the people from the Jat community are the dominating caste group because the majority of population are found over there. Similarly, in the Rajnagar block the people highly dependent on agriculture especially Male members called **"CHASA"** are dominating here as the majority of the people engage themselves in the agricultural sector and become a part of the Chasa community. Because, they have their own land and many of the people also share their land with others as a rent. **(bahut loka jami bhagare dianti)**. The poor people or the tenants who do not have their own land to cultivate, the landowners provide their land to work over there. In this block, approximately 80% workers are working in Kharif Crop.

Basically, the people who depend on agriculture are preferred to work on a seasonal basis to maintain their livelihood as the agriculture is not sufficient to survive and maintain their family. About the engagement of the women category in the agricultural sector, then very few women work in agriculture. Most of the unmarried girls were going outside to work in different sectors like manufacturing sector, construction sector and also in the service sector. After marriage, few people shifted with their entire family to the other states and settled over there otherwise mostly men are going to the outside without their family members.

III. Case Study -2

She Informant said "every two months I sent 18000/- to home". Except I spend only Rs 1000/- for my food and dresses including cosmetics. Due to COVID we have faced various challenges **(COVID- 19 pain bahut hairana heigalu shopping kariba pain)** even though it has not been opened. We all wear full dress and the higher position of any employers are not allowed to the workers to wear shorts. The Malayalam workers also wear full body cover dresses, though they are Christian. In the KERALA, there was a rule that everyone had to wear full body cover dresses. Miss.Sabita never went to the temple or church but the workers went to the temple during the festival called Jagara (Shivraatri). Christian workers visited the church but the girls from the Odia community never went to the church. There would be some brokers in the railway station, when new girls arrived at the station in Kerala, the brokers came into the station at take to the new girls to work at KERALA.

Apart from it, if the girls are new then, they have to pay a certain amount. Among the brokers, few like 1-2 members belonged to Odia whereas rest of the members were from Malayalam. Both the genders (married women & men) worked over there as a broker. The brokers from the KERALA had prior communication with the migrant worker(those girls who will be visiting there) and collected about the reaching time of those girls who emigrated from Odisha to Kerala and at the same time they took us to the company by the company bus provided by the company. The broker will receive money if they take us to the company. The brokers were staying in the Alugan station in Kerala. Arriving and return tickets were provided but due to COVID, it has been stopped **(ei lockdown paru karunahanti)** we are booking ourselves. I have never travelled alone to Kerala, in fact, me and my friends mostly 4-5 went together. As per her statement, both Malayalam and Odia workers have separate hostels and Malayalam & Tamil people are less in comparison to Odia.

About the salary, initially, she received 7000/- per month, then it was increased and she received 8,500/- excluding PF. For the work, she was trained for about 15 days. She was engaged in tailoring working which includes stitches of clothes as given by her senior officers as a target base. When she was admitted at hospital which was outside of the KERALA boundary, the company did all the hospital expenses

With regards to the safety and security at KERALA then it is very much safe for the girls working over there because they have followed a lot of safety protocols along with they have followed strict rules and regulations inside the boundary. As per her statement, the working hour is 8-9 hours per day. Apart from that, during her working she was doing two times of OT (Over time duty). For overtime work the company provides her extra amount along with salary. The extra amount was based on the target.

The migrant workers are basically from Jaipur, Bhadrak and Kendrapara who are working at KERALA. In the KERALA, the workers and the brokers were different from each other. The brokers who are working for the company received salary and also received an extra amount for providing workers to the company. The lady

brokers behave well in front of migrant workers and treat them well as they belong to Odisha, especially from Kendrapara. She helps us in Kerala. Informants do not have the number of the lady broker. In KERALA, they provide us accommodation along with food, therefore girls are staying over there and also have the interest to work at KERALA. Because except food and accommodation, the company provides us a good salary and also takes care of our safety and security.

Sabita's father is involved in the agricultural work which belongs to Kendrapara district. Basically, they cultivate rice in their own land without borrowing land from others for the cultivation, they earn almost 40000/- annually. By the cultivation of rice, the migrant workers manage their livelihood like food. Earlier, we had our own duplex shop at the market in the Centre area. We sold their shop to construct our home because of the financial crunch. We do not have sufficient money to build our home. Therefore we sold our shop.

Apart from it, the workers are working in different places like Kerala, Dubai etc. The money which was transferred by me was always used for the construction of our home and for the electricity payment. If anything was left then her father saved that money for the marriage. Because, in a marriage especially for girls, high expenses are found in this area. Maximum 4-5 lakh will be the expenditure of one girl child. Initially, they were providing us training to manage the workload within fifteen days. After fifteen days, they have not listened to any employees a single word if the targets were not fulfilled by the workers. They started using swear words on them. But we have completed on time based on the target which was given by the supervisor.

Earlier Most of the employees in the KERALA Garments Company were from Malayalam religion people but subsequently it has been changed and covered by the migrant workers who are mostly from the Hindu religion. In the KERALA Garment Company, no one is there to bring out any of the workers. Rather, if the worker wants to leave his job then he can resign by following official rules and regulations.

As a response, the company provided them food regularly including chicken, Fish, egg and Ash gourd curry etc. But Ash gourd is a common vegetable which is cooked on a regular basis. Many workers did not like to have that food but still have to eat that food, because as per the rule of the company, the food which is provided by the company will have to be consumed. But during the Covid-19 outbreak, the food supply provision also decreased, as the work process was halted. During this time, the workers ran to the canteen to have their food like Puri, Upama, Maggie and noodles. But few days after, the workers were faced various issues related to Food

Miss Sabita enjoyed the work because the company provided us lots of facilities including food, accommodation and also taking care of our safety and security. I am so interested to join KERALA again at KERALA but due to the restrictions of the parents I am staying here. In Fact, when we wanted to go outside, the security guard also went with us which makes us more happy and feel secure in Kerala as we are unaware of most of the places. Therefore, the security guards guide us which makes it easier for them to walk outside. I am less interested to work in Odisha because, work pressure, less provision provided by the company along with very less opportunity in Odisha. Therefore, we (me and friends) are very much interested to visit other places but most preferable to KERALA because we are very much user friendly with the environment of KERALA and also its rules and regulations implemented by the company for the purpose of our safety and security.

Apart from working outside of the place, we have also worked in the agricultural sector. Mostly they have preferred to do Kharif Fasal rather than Rabi Fasal. About the resources and requirements which are required for the cultivation such as seeds (Which are called a ("Bihana"), fertilizers. The cultivator collects and invests from own fund. For 2 acre land, they have used 30 kg of seeds. If they cultivate 3 acre of land then they will buy 45kgs of seeds (Bihana), for that they spent Rs 900/- for the 15kg of fertilizer in this year. All expenses have been done by his own savings. By our involvement in agricultural activities, we have earned 2000-2200 per month and also rice for our own consumption. We do not sell the paddy rather convert it into rice for our livelihood.

Sabita sent the money to her family and her father used it for the construction work of their home as well as for the electrical expenses like bill payment. The remaining amount they have saved for the daughter's marriage in future. In one marriage ceremony, we have to spend 4-5 lakhs and recently one elder daughter got married so they don't have sufficient finance to arrange another daughter's marriage ceremony. So, currently, they just focus on work, so that they can earn money.

Premanand, a brother of Sabita, who suggested that she go Kerala and work over there. Because, initially he worked over there and communicated with Sabita and explained to her about the work and process of activities and salary. In Odisha, there is no opportunity to work and become financially independent and earn money. Therefore, Sabita and other friends here, decided to go Kerala, especially at KERALA.

Her family structure is a joint family, but, due to family issues they have been separated. So now, her uncles are staying separate from her family. Basically they are staying in Rourkela in a rented house and Sabita and her family members are staying in Kendrapara. When Sabita went to Kerala, she was not afraid as her brothers also worked at Kerala and most of the time they were met by Sabita at her Company i.e KERALA. But neighbors and villagers also suggested that they don't let go of her as she is a girl. In fact most of the villagers questioned her mother why she allowed her daughter to go to Kerala. (**Jhia taku ete dura kahinki chadilu?**)

After all these questions, her mother was not scared and interacted with her daughter and Sabita said that "I am fine and everything is systematic including food facility, salary and bonus and many more things they provided which is very nice". Firstly, she went to Kerala alone and her friends also went to Kerala to work at KERALA. In her locality, Sabita is the first girl child who travelled outside Odisha to work at KERALA. After her, most of the girls were inspired and also interested to visit Kerala.

In her village, a network kind of work continued when the journey was started from Odisha to KERALA. When Sabita went, other parents came up to Sabita's house to ask about the details of where Sabita worked. Then, she recommended them to work at KERALA. After working at KERALA she did not even change the same as now, said her mother. But earlier she was a little bit nervous by nature but recently she became a smart girl, said her brother. When she faced her problem and became aware of everything by herself, that affected her in order to change her personality from time to time.

When her brother and Sabita reached the station, they had called the company employees who's called brokers, they came and took Sabita to the KERALA garment Company. The person who referred me to visit KERALA to work at KERALA Garment Company, kept the visiting card with themselves. They have given to us. Therefore, when we reached the other girls who are also even going to Kerala, they were contacted by the company and they took all the girls to the Company. During her journey from Kendrapara to Kerala, Sabita met a few other girls at a station in Kerala but they were unknown to Sabita. When she came home on leave, she came to know that the girl with whom she met was also from her village. As per Premanand's response, when he came to his village and wandered across her village and interacted with people then he came to know that few of the girls went to the KERALA.

Some brokers worked over there, who were especially assigned for the work to receive the girls from the station. They were significantly involved in all this work. Companies provide them salary and also if they will provide girls as per their reference then they will receive extra amount excluded from their salary. Currently, her brother works in Dubai as a plumber and agrees with sabita's statement that the broker system is also continuing in Dubai.

IV. Case Study: 03

Respondent (Laxmipriya Nayak, not real name) said that Swarnaprava Mohanty, who introduced her to the KERALA Company, which is located in the state of Kerala. She is 21 years old, and Liza (Close Sister-in-Law) lived in Rajnagar block in the Kendrapara district. In her family, there are seven members including her 2 sisters and one younger brother. As Ms. Swarnaprava was introduced to Laxmipriya and also to Liza to work about the company, therefore, both were working at KERALA Company where different religion people were worked unitely. Ms. Laxmipriya and Liza completed their education up to 12th second year whereas Swarnaprava has completed her education up to matric. As per her statement, Ms. Nayak and Liza went to Kerala in the year 2019 and 2018 respectively after introduced by the Ms. Swarnaprava. When the Government of India was announced the nationwide lockdown especially during the COVID-19 period, Ms Nayak and Ms Mohanty was returned to home by the help of tollywood actor Sonu Sood whereas Liza was came back before the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown without help of Sonu Sood. When the interviewer asked about the work details especially related to continuity of working, during the nationwide lockdown, as a response we got know that the work process was halt and they were staying in that company by force as the whole nation was lockdown, however, they had their food only, which was given by the company. Because, the pandemic's impact on the remittance economy which has been varied everywhere but it has widely affected the migrant workers' pattern of life. Because, they were quite dependent on the salary to continue their process of life. Therefore, based on the objective, interviewer asked about the salary structure to interpreting of the migrants workers' economic condition, Thus, the interviewer questioning about the earning profile on a monthly basis, As a response, she said that, during the working period, she was earned 9000/- per month which is basically based on grading system which segregated into different grades like first, second, third and fourth grade. As per respondent's response the grading system basically depends on the experience and potential for the work. If a worker would be newly appointed in the company, then she/he will be assigned under the fourth grade. Simultaneously, based on their performance and dedication towards their work will increase their salary as well as moving upward of the grading system. When the interviewer asked about the salary under the respective grades, as a response we received that, the people from 4th grade were received 6000/- per month whereas in the 3rd grade 8000-9000/-, and about the rest two grades, she was unaware because, she was received her salary under the 3rd grade, not much important to go through it, therefore she was not interfered all these. We were asked about the contribution as well as family expenditure in a monthly, she said, from the salary 5000-7000/- provided to the family excluding the personal expenditure.

During the first phase of COVID-19 pandemic, the work process was temporarily discontinued and the migrant workers unable to reach their native homes and forced to stay there. When Sonu Sood came forward to help the migrant workers, at that time, Ms. Nayak resigned from the company and applied for releasing the

Provident fund (PF). Thereafter, they were released from the PF, Ms. Nayak received only 13K as a Provident fund (PF) instead of 60k as she had worked more than one year. She received her Provident fund (PF) via bank account transfer. But when the interviewer asked why did you receive this much amount as a PF? She responded that due to a bank account issue she was unable to receive more as the designated employees of the company provided this information to her. The company employee provided information to her that there might be a bank issue so you would not be able to receive the remaining money, she added. About this transaction issue when Ms nayak was given a complaint to the employee of the KERALA Company with having a purpose to collect the remaining amount and asked about to investigate the details about the working days through PINCODE number from the company officials and also requested to them to provide PINCODE details to her but they did not provide her it in a systematic way based on certain norms. Instead of PINCODE, the employee from the company was given orders that if they return Kerala to continue the work again then only receive the PINCODE details along with the remaining Provident Fund (PF) otherwise they would not be able to receive the PINCODE. According to Ms Mohanty, PINCODE means the Punching card number, through which they can calculate the working days they have done in the company.

When the interviewer asked about the food consumption, as a response, we got to know that the company provided them food regularly including chicken, Fish, egg and Ash gourd curry etc. But Ash guard is a common vegetable which is cooked on a regular basis. Many workers did not like to have that food but still have to eat that food, because as per the rule of the company, the food which is provided by the company will have to be consumed. But during the Covid-19 outbreak, the food supply provision also decreased, as the work process was halted. During this time, the workers ran to the canteen to have their food like Puri, Upama, Maggie and noodles. But a few days later, the workers were faced with various issues related to Food.

When the interviewer asked about the travel and leave facilities, Ms Mohanty responded that the company reinforced the expenses by providing transports such as bus. But, especially during the period of COVID-19, the migrant workers were not even benefited because they were not arranged any transport facility to reach their homes. As per her view only personal expenditures will be expensed by us. Ms Mohanty stated that, as per rule of the company, that an employee would not be able get any leave before one year, therefore, no matter what happen, **(ghare bapa maa nkara kichi heigale v chhuti debe nai)** they did not provide them a single leave from their work. After one year, a worker is eligible to get leave which is also restricted up to 1 month. During the leave period, the company also deducted the money around 300/- per day from the salary.

When the interviewers asked about the perspectives and views regarding the importance of the work and the work culture in the KERALA Garment Company, as per her response, most of the girls are visiting that place and working at KERALA is to maintain their lifestyle instead of family responsibilities. But we were working at KERALA to continue our survival life with lots of responsibilities in our head. **(Emiti jhia achanti joumane ayesh karibaku jauchanti j jibu di paisa rojgar karibu make-up habu, free re bulibu kintu bahut loka Kama karuchanti joumananka sei paisare handi re chaula paduchi)**. But she was going to work at KERALA Garments to support her family as her family's financial condition was not good. Apart from that, her 2 sisters and one younger brother depend on her. In a particular circumstance, if a girl will face any kind of problem during the leave period, then the company will deduct the money as well from their salary. During the working hours, the company provides them as a target, which is mostly 1800, 2000, and 3000 cutting clothes to stitch and fulfill the target at the end of the day. Apart from it, Ms. Mohanty also stated that they were able to stitch around 5000 cloths per day within 8 hours. If the target will not be fulfilled by us, then they will start expletives on them in Malayalam language along with Hindi language but they understand very less, though they communicate in Hindi language with them. Starting period of each employee will receive 10-15 days only to settle down and based on future perspective the higher designated employees provide them with an order to adopt the work culture as soon as possible for fulfilling the target in near future. They have provided guidance along with the training to manage the workload within the fifteen days. After fifteen days, they have not listened to any employees a single word if the targets were not fulfilled by the workers. They started using swear words on them. She also stated that, if the target is fulfilled by us then the supervisor never forces us to do the extra work but if any pending work is available then he can just instruct the worker to stitch the pending unstitched cutting pieces which specially depends on the migrant workers whether they will do or not.

About the health condition, she stated that, most of the women workers have a common health i.e joint pain, because we have to continuously work in a day except the 45 minutes of lunch break. Except that, headache, mental stress to complete the work along with vision problems she added. Apart from it, during the COVID-19 period, if a worker decides to go back to the workplace, then the company will ensure the health condition of the worker by testing a blood sample but will not provide the report to the workers.

When we wanted to identify the accommodation facility of the workers at the workplace, we got to know that based on the respondent's response there are a lot of rules and regulations that have to be followed if the married couple is staying there. One crucial rule was identified that the father of the daughter who was already married and staying at KERALA, would not be able to receive permission easily to meet his daughter. As per her

statement, lots of procedure and references are required to meet and communicate a daughter with her father (**mu kahibi janaku, se aau jananku, emit hei, dunia lafada seithi**). Though, parents and relatives will show them their ID-proofs like Aadhaar Card and observe the similarities of the sur-names then only get permission to meet their family members otherwise the higher designated employees were not allowed them to meet. But the workers are taking it as a normal and considering it that the company follows because of their safety and security of the female workers. Apart from it, a married woman cannot take her child to the workplace i.e KERALA Garment. Because, in the workplace, there is not any kind of provision for child care. Therefore, most nuclear families, especially those who are married, are shifted to Kerala and permanently staying there in a rented house.

On the other hand, she also mentioned that, for the girls who want to enjoy their lives with freedom, the strict rules and regulations are the positive aspects which provide them more enjoyment within their circle. If the female workers want to go outside, the security employee from KERALA will provide assistance to them. As per the response of the respondents' if the company will provide full freedom there must be a conflict as the boys and girls are staying together because most of the workers are unmarried. In that sense, unmarried workers are more than the married couple, she added. The security guide and their providing security creates a fearless atmosphere for both workers as well as the company. When the interviewer asked, after marriage the company called you again or not? As a response she said that, after the marriage of a girl, she is not unable to go neither outside nor to the workplace, because her husband is not allowing her. Neither she nor her husband was not returned to that KERALA Company because of receiving less salary.

In addition, as per her statement, she is forced to go outside because their economic condition is very poor, therefore, her husband is also going to Bangalore to work whereas her father-in-law who is 70 years old is still working in the agricultural sector. The land in which her father-in-law cultivated is borrowed from others. For this cultivation, they have mostly earned 2000-3000/- per month. But the mechanism which is used in the cultivation is more than the monthly earning. It is a harsh situation for them to survive their life.

Summary of the Interview:-

Basically, the migrant workers have been faced with a lot of problems and continuously fight with the financial crisis. So, they have been forced to go outside to earn money to survive. In the above interview, we will get to know that the facility given by the company is purposefully average but the workload of the company on the migrant workers is very high with mental stress and health issues. Lots of problems they have faced like low salary, target based work, leave not allowed no matter what happened, restricted within work area etc.

V. Case Study- 4

During the 1st phase of COVID-19 KERALA was restricted to their employees who migrated for not to go home. But the migrant labour answered that they want to return to their home as they have already stayed 1yr 10th month. So, she wanted to go home very eagerly. (**ete dina hela rahilini mu gharaku jibini, mu jibi**). But the manager did not allow her to leave the office and return to the home. As their statement, the COVID-19 currently spreading all over the world doesn't go. But Miss Das said she wanted to go home without any consternation of COVID-19. (**Roga heu pachhe mu jibi ama gharaku**). 1st one year was ended up and her health was not work at that time and resigned with emergency cause was mentioning and return to her home. She was returned by herself. For 1 year she was returned without help of Sonu Sood. As per her statement she was reached safely at home before when there was less number of corona affected among people. She was returned on leave rather than resign, and also aware about the difference between resign and leave. She was returned by providing a leave application for 1 month, and without any notice she decided not to return to the workplace.

As her statement her family member was restricting her not to return to the workplace. she is interested to again but due to her family restriction she do not want to visit. Because everything is good at KERALA including salary accommodation facility, food facility as well. But the quality of food is not good enough but the other things which we are unable to receive at home as we are lower middle class. So, she has to work over there as she has not completed 1 year of her work over there. So, she wished to go there but parents instructed her not to revisit there as the food habits are not good as they expected, and this can be the cause of bad health. She was prepared to return but her parents did not allow her to return over there. She stayed a prolonged period after taking leave from the company. After completion of leave period she has received a call from the company to join again in the company but due to the restriction of the parents and family member. She is not unable to go there. She came because of the health issue, and especially at that time, she was a patient at the hospital and directly came to home as she dictated with asthma disease and returned home without her personal requirement like dresses. After coming to home she got to know about the salary which was pending, that she received from 11k- 13k as her higher positional authority informed her. She has not kept her salary slip or any other documents which she received from the company.

As per the rule of KERALA, every employee will receive the punching card which helps them to be admitted at hospital and returned to home after giving leave application; the higher positional officer took the

punching card and told her to not provide it again. She has no proof that she worked at KERALA. They did not even provide any official document by which they could be able to identify that they worked at KERALA when she was admitted at the hospital in Kerala, she was faced with asthma attacks with an interval of 5 days and doctors provided her oxygen. During the period of treatment, she realised that she was not improving by the treatment of the doctor and decided to return home but the higher positional authority did not allow her because as per statement that if she will come home by train then that could be a create a problem, so they did not allowed her but sharmistha's uncle told them that if any problem happening to her on the way then he will be the responsible for it. (Tara kichhi be asubidha haba mu dai haba). In fact they were given a consent form in which her uncle was sighed and he was taken to the hospital from Kerala. Her uncle also worked for 20 years and currently he is working at KERALA.

Due to the overwork, the dust has entered their body which significantly infected and as a result various health issues like cold and cough. Most of the people have the cough disease while working on machines for the stitches of clothes. Without medicine, they never cure. They have suggested the employee eat "Gur" before covid-19 but they were neither given nor suggested for having the "Gur" which can help us to reduce our infection. The higher authority from the KERALA, suggested wearing a mask before covid-19, asking instead of "Gur".

About the salary, initially, she received 7000/- per month, then it was increased and she received 8,500/- excluding PF. For the work, she was trained for about 15 days. She was engaged in tailoring working which includes stitches of clothes as given by her senior officers as a target base. When she was admitted to a hospital which was outside of the KERALA boundary, the company did all the hospital expenses. Miss. Sharmistha kept 5000-6000/- with her for the treatment expenditure in the hospital but it was done by the company.

With regards to the safety and security at KERALA then it is very much safe for the girls working over there because they have followed a lot of safety protocols along with they have followed strict rules and regulations inside the boundary. As per her statement, the working hour is 8-9 hours per day. Apart from that, during her working she was doing two times of OT (Over time duty). For overtime work the company provides her extra amount along with salary. The extra amount was based on the target. As per the work completion of the given as a target based decided the amount which the migrant worker will receive. The extra amount could be 1000/-, 1200/- and 1800/- which are credited in her account.

Miss. Sharmistha went to Kerala because of the financial crunch in her family. She decided to go to Kerala especially to work at KERALA because most of the girls from her village went to Kerala. Those working over KERALA, they have been motivated to miss Sharmistha to join KERALA by asking that, work culture, work process, salary facility etc are very good at KERALA. **(seithi sabu chale, Kerala bahut bhala, bhala paisa dianti, misiki kama kariba etc.)**. Miss. Sima and Kajal are two friends who approached her to join KERALA. But her close friend Sima was most of the time encouraging her to join KERALA. Miss. Sima also returned from KERALA due to her marriage ceremony but about Kajal, then currently, she is working over there.

In the KERALA, a network business was going on; if a person/employee approached another and joined at KERALA then the person (who approached for) received extra payment except their salary. Those people never expose the extra amount for the reference of another person, but Sharmistha along with the other migrant workers are very much well known about the commission provided by the higher officials from the KERALA. The higher positionary authorities asked over the phone that "if anyone in your village is looking for jobs, you can refer her to work at our company". But currently, Miss Sharmistha gets disconnected with her colleagues/ friends due to the mobile damage. That is the reason; she has changed her sim card and does not have any of the KERALA employees.

As per statement, the workers are involved in other work related to the same work i.e tailoring, if the target based work finished before the time period. In fact, she has also engaged in the most of the time in the other stitches work for that she did not even receive any kind of extra payment. In the KERALA, there were many workers working over there who especially belonged to the Odia community, such as security guards. Apart from that, a women worker belonging to Assam was working at KERALA provided cloth pieces to the workers and recorded everything. If anything need in between the work process, she was provided with them. As per sharmistha said, sima was in the senior post who handled everything of those workers who are especially from Odia Community. Miss Sima and her sisters have good relations with the KERALA employees. They all are working over there till they get married.

The married couples are going Kerala to work especially at KERALA and there is provision for married people as well. Most of the women not only from Odisha but also from Assam are working there after their marriage. More than 6000 girls are working at KERALA Company. The hostel where Miss Sharmistha stayed was basically a Malayalam hostel because most of the girls were from Malayalam and only 5-6 girls were from Odia community.

The workers from the KERALA received bonus especially in the festival season like Alma festival, a famous festival celebrated by the Malayalam people. They were providing white saree along with other accessories like a necklace. Apart from it, they also give us Rs 1800/- as a bonus payment. Miss. Sharmistha said,

when she was working at KERALA received a bonus but in the later phase those who entered into KERALA were not given the bonus amount.

In the year 2017 April 10, Miss. Sharmitha went to Kerala to join KERALA and she was returned in the year 2018 April 10. Sharp 1 year she worked over there, she added. After that she has suffered with health issues and continuously visits the hospital. During the working period at KERALA 2017-2018, a lot of programs were arranged by the KERALA Company and provided us with various kinds of sweets and the Malayalam people arranged the program very beautifully. In this program, the Malayalam artists participated and performed accordingly. Basically, the Malayalam people from the KERALA gave importance to the cultural activities during the year 2017-2018. Miss. Sharmitha, after returning from the KERALA, currently teaches 12-15 students by creating a private tuition center in her village. The students are basically from nursery to class-2. By this profession, she is earning 1200-1500 per month.

Har father's name is Bichitra das, aged 50, who is a farmer and illiterate by educational qualification. His father engaged in the paddy procurement activities in 3 acre land which his father had taken from the land owners as a rent basis. That is called a "BHAGA JAMI" (rented land). In this system, whatever the farmer earns annually, that will be divided as a 50:50 ratio between the land owner and the farmer (who has borrowed land for the cultivation).

As per the statement, due to covid-19, agricultural activities become a challenge for us to continue agriculture because of the financial crunch. Therefore, they did not gain much profit, especially in this year. But in the last year, we have gained 30 quintal of paddy which was sold. It helps us for the maintenance of family livelihood. Now her father was not involved in the paddy procurement because of the high wages of the laborers. By the system of rented land cultivation, the land owners get more benefited than the cultivator, her father added. Therefore, the quantity of paddy or the amount they received instead of paddy is insufficient to continue their livelihood.

As per her father's information, most of the people did not have their own land especially those who are belong to Okilawada village of Kendrapara district. The landlord/ land owner of the land are not living in this village, they are staying far away from the village. When the cultivation will be finished then the landowners visit to their village to receive their paddy as per the prior agreement. The paddy procurement sell by the landlord either to the retailer or the people who does not have their own land and depend on the others and required for their family consumption, they are also buying from the land owners. The retailers are from the neighbour village of the Okilawada village. The paddies buy from the landlords by the others for the purpose of consumption.

About the resources and requirements required for the cultivation such as seeds (Which called a ("Bihana")), fertilizers, and then the landlord did not provide all these. The cultivator collects and invests from own fund. For 1 acre land, they have used 15kgs of seeds. If they cultivate 3 acre of land then they will buy 45kgs of seeds (Bihana), for that they spent Rs 900/- for the 15kg of fertilizer in this year. All expenses have been done by his own savings.

In the KERALA, they have deducted money from the salary for the food. But she is unaware about how much it has been deducted. Because, in the salary slip it is not mentioned as well. When she was on leave and decided to not return again to Kerala. Then she asked her close brother about the PF money and he communicated with the company employees and tried to release her PF fund which she has received 32000 that was credited in her account.

VI. Findings:

While KERALA offered work, accommodation, and relative safety, it also enforced exploitative practices, lack of transparency, limited worker rights, and insufficient health care. COVID-19 further exacerbated these vulnerabilities, highlighting the urgent need for labor reforms, transparent wage and benefit systems, and stronger regulatory oversight in such industries. Overall, the case studies reveal how women migrants occupy a precarious position in the labor market—caught between exploitative work conditions in destination states and limited livelihood options in their places of origin. The findings call for gender-sensitive labor policies, stronger social security measures, and crisis-response mechanisms tailored to migrant workers.