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Work life of Transgender in Kerala



KERALA INSTITUTE OF
LABOUR AND
EMPLOYMENT (KILE)

Work life of Transgender in Kerala: A Case Study

**KERALA INSTITUTE OF LABOUR AND
EMPLOYMENT (KILE)
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Foreword

Kerala Institute of Labour and Employment (KILE) is proud to be part of the welfare of the marginalized community like Transgender for the second time with a detailed study on ‘Work-life of transgender in Kerala – A Case study’. The study is part of the Research Project ‘*A result oriented study to ensure social acceptance for the transgender persons of the society by providing them mainstream job opportunities*’. The present study has crucial importance in shaping the 2.5 years long research project. The present endeavour has adopted case study approach to disclose the current employment scenario of transgender community in terms of availability, accessibility and accommodation. I am sure that the said work will be beneficial for the programme and policy personnel in designing appropriate policies for transgender community.

The support rendered by the management, staff and transgender employees of KMRL is the backbone of this study. Similarly, officials of Kudumbashree and transgender members of NHGs also helped us to complete the work in the stipulated time frame. The Bishop, Mother Superior and inmates of Jyothis Bhavan paved way for a smooth conduction of the study there. I thank all the persons who supported the study. The technical committee members also helped us to design the study in a good manner. The hard work of the study team needs to be specially mentioned as they completed the interviews during the time of pandemic without any hesitation.

KILE express its sincere gratitude to all the researchers and reviewers and hope that the policy makers will fruitfully utilize the results of the study for framing policies for the welfare of the transgender community in Kerala.

M. Shajeena

Executive Director, Kile

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Executive Summary

‘Transgender’ the term is always a taboo in our society. Even after implementing many policies and legal aids for the betterment of the conditions of the transgender community, societal taboo exists. The historical verdict of the Honourable Supreme Court of India in April 2014, was a milestone in the recognition of the rights of the transgender community and in advocating both non-discrimination of any Indian citizen along the lines of gender identity as well as reservations in the employment and education sectors for this community. The verdict was succeeded by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill in 2016, 2018 and 2019. Kerala, as the first Indian state to formulate a transgender policy in 2015, implemented several policy changes to incorporate transgender in the core of the programme. Promoting participation in the government sector, the Public Service Commission in Kerala has given an option to include –third gender in the application form.

Appointment of transgender by KMRL, the first public sector metro was a historical step towards further acceptance of the transgender in Kerala community. The study has assessed the work-life of transgender in Kerala through case study of KMRL and initiatives of Kudumbashree. It revealed that the taboo and trans phobia still exist in the Kerala society towards transgender. The work satisfaction of transgender employees in the KMRL has been recognised as a mixture of positive and negative feelings. However, it has established higher level of societal acceptance to them. Solution for their satisfaction never remains only with KMRL. Government need to formulate appropriate measures to include them in the core of society. The problems like accommodation, treatment cost of surgery etc. need to be looked after by the Government.

Kudumbashree has created a parallel revolution by forming NHGs for transgender people. These initiatives not only boosted employability of transgender people but also provided them social acceptance and confidence as entrepreneurs. Jyothis Bhavan in Ernakulam is a model solution of accommodation issue that transgender people faces during the entire period of their life. But implementation of such a system is not practical in general. The solution need to be formulated from the society itself. Ultimately, the transgender persons should be accommodated in their own houses with respect. The society needs to ensure education and provide support to them to become self-dependent.

Work life of Transgender in Kerala: A Case Study

1. Introduction

Transgender people have existed in every race, class and society since the history of human life has been recorded. The modern term 'transgender' arose in the mid-1990s from the grassroots community of gender-different people. John F. Oliven in 1965 first termed them as 'transgender'. There are a host of socio-cultural groups within trans people in India like hijras, kinnars, and other identities like - shiv-shaktis, jogtas, jogappas, etc. Generally, the term transgender describes people whose gender identity or expression does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Sex alludes to natural contrasts, chromosomes, hormonal profiles and interior and outer sex organs.

Since 1990's, world had experienced tremendous movement for gender equality especially connected with the women empowerment movements which argued for the rights of transgender in the later decades. Legal rights, ensuring health care facilities of the transgender community were focused in the preliminary stages and later it took issues like workplace inequalities and promotion of wellness of transgender as a whole in the West. When the world of fashion industries accepted trans-women and trans-men in Europe and America as cover pages of leading fashion magazines, it resulted societal acceptance also. When the U.S. Department of Defence (2016) officially declared that transgender Americans could serve openly in the military, and could not be discharged "just for being transgender", it ensued more number of American coming out as transgender openly. Many employers responded to awareness of transgender workers by developing new policies aimed at accommodations, in part because of complaints and lawsuits claiming discrimination.

Though there has been a positive movement for the LGBTQIA+ community in recent years, many transgender feel there's still a lot more to do in the fight for equality. As per the transgender persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2016, it prohibits discrimination against a transgender person, including unfair treatment or denial of service in relation to employment, education, healthcare, access to public goods and facilities, etc. Also, in 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized homosexuality by striking down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, terming it unconstitutional in respect of consensual homosexual sex between adults.

The historical verdict of the Honourable Supreme Court of India in April 2014, in a suit between National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) *and* Union of India was a milestone in the recognition of the rights of the transgender community and in advocating both non-discrimination of any Indian citizen along the lines of gender identity as well as reservations in the employment and education sectors for this community. The verdict was succeeded by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill in 2016, 2018 and 2019.

1.1 Transgender in the Indian context

Transgender persons were treated with respect in India and were engaged in reputable jobs during different segments in Indian history. ‘Vedas’ has recognized three genders which is evident in the descriptions in Ramayana. Mahabhaya (200 BC) by Patanjali and Tolkappiyam in Tamil (300 BC) considered three natural genders and were treated them as normal. The offerings by transgender community on special occasions were considered sacred and they were given appropriate donations also.

During the period of Mughal rule, transgender people occupied key positions as political advisors, administrators and generals. Hijras were considered clever, trustworthy and fiercely loyal and had free access to all spaces and sections of population, thereby playing a crucial role in the politics of empire building in the Mughal era. In the beginning of the British rule the privileges of the transgender were continued with restrictions; however radical changes occurred when they vigorously criminalized the Hijra community and denied them civil rights. Hijras

were considered to be a separate caste or tribe in different parts of India by the colonial administration. This situation continued so far in the modern India also.

According to National Human Rights Commission, about 92 percent of transgender (TOI, 2018) are deprived of the right to participate in any form of economic activity in the country, with even qualified ones refused jobs. There are several efforts to engage transgender in mainstream job sectors both by private NGOs and Government. Different states have taken steps to strengthen its transgender people. The states like Maharashtra, Odisha, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have developed various programmes for the welfare of the transgender persons. Transgender welfare boards in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and 'Sweekruti' in Odisha provide vocational training, short-stay homes for transgender persons, educational assistance with pre & post metric scholarships, personality development, skill development etc. for achieving mainstream job opportunities for the transgender community.

The Centre had constituted the National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP) to formulate policies, programmes, draft legislation and projects regarding members of the community for achieving equality and full participation by them. Recent developments in the country have permitted transgender persons to hold positions in CRPF, and major para-military forces. The success stories of Joyita Mondal from West Bengal becoming the first transgender judge in the country, as well as K. Prithika Yashini of Tamil Nadu becoming the first Transgender sub-inspector, might be due to the combined effect of individual struggles and policy changes.

1.2 The Kerala scenario

For the past one decade, several policy initiatives were taken place in order to attract the transgender to the mainstream in India. For the first time, Census of India collected information about the transgender population. It revealed that 3902 persons reported as transgender in 2011 in Kerala. It is less than one percent of the total transgender in India. There are higher chances of misreporting or underreporting the figures. Transgender in Kerala are the first in literacy in India along with Mizoram.

There were several movements across India, which gained popularity through agitations and by conducting special programs for the welfare of transgender community. Transgender associations like Aravani activism in Tamil Nadu, the Lingathwara Alpasankhyathara Yojana (a gender minorities programme that provides training, loans and subsidies through non-governmental organizations) in Karnataka, and Dwaya in Kerala formed a base for the welfare programs for the deprived community.

Due to the conservative social culture in Kerala, till recent years, transgender persons fled to Coimbatore for their livelihood and later migrated to Bengaluru for a better living arrangement. However, the journey is not an easy one as one reads this line. The socio-cultural barrier a transgender has to overcome even in schooling is very complicated in Kerala. They have to struggle a lot to complete their schooling with this identity crisis. The Kerala State Literacy Mission pointed higher dropout among students when they move up to higher classes mainly due to identity crisis, abuse from elders and class mates and restrictions on the use of rest rooms in schools. Pressure from family persuades them to move from the ancestral place to other cities. For ensuring a livelihood, many of them travel through Coimbatore to Bengaluru and joins Hijra community. In both the places, they have to work for their 'guru' or caregiver by engaging in sex work, collecting money from public through begging, etc. Forced surgery without the help of medical personnel is common in these places. Such a situation describes nothing but life of servitude and bonded labour as per the report of the expert committee for transgender (2014). Due to their inability to come back and engage in other activities, many of the Kerala transgender had undergone such wretched conditions. Most of the transgender persons are invisible in public places in Kerala compared to other states. Fear of exclusion from family, discontinuation of studies or being fired from workplaces are the major reasons for the invisible nature of transgender in Kerala. The culture of Guru-Chela, Master-Disciple or Mother-Daughter also started prevalent in Kerala in recent years and it initially acts as a supportive system for the welfare of the latter. Transgender suffer discrimination at various places, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, lack of medical facilities, depression, abuses like high usage of hormone pill, tobacco and alcohol etc.

Scholars like Aneesh (2016)¹, Joseph (2013)², Venkatrama Raju and Beena (2015)³ established that majority of the transgender are facing discrimination from every aspect of their life, such as education, occupation, and health care. Negative experience at the time of schooling such as discrimination from school games, teasing from friends, physical harassment, avoidance by the teachers etc accelerate dropout among them. Community and family pressure to get married is another factor that hastens them to leave home or commit suicide. The conflict between forced sexual orientation and actual gender identity force them to end the marital relationship by separation, divorce or suicide. Yogyakarta⁴ principles treat both sexual orientation and gender identity integral to every person's dignity and humanity and points that it must not be the basis for discrimination or abuse. Though having children, 70-80 percent of those enter into marital relationship part ways within a month or year as per the Transgender Survey Kerala (2014)⁵.

1.3 Employment status of transgender in Kerala

Ensuring employment is a major milestone to improve the well-being of this marginalized community. The Expert committee (2014)⁶ for transgender has recommended adopting a convergence approach for the welfare of the said community. Various ministries are giving

¹Aneesh MS (2016), Social Exclusion Of Physically Disabled Transgenders (M To F) In Kerala, *Int. J. Adv. Res.* 5(4), 1-6.

²Joseph, D. (2013). Social exclusion of transgender: Problems and prospects. *Indian Social Science Journal*, 2(1), 73.

³VenkatramaRaju, D., &Beena, K. S. (2015).A study on socio-economic issues of third genders in Tamilnadu.*International Journal of Science and Research*, 4(7), 1354–1357.

⁴The Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:
http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles_en.htm

⁵SANGAMA. The Transgender Survey of Kerala, 2014-2015. Submitted to the Department of Social Justice, Kerala Government. Kerala: SANGAMA; 2020. Available from: <http://www.sjd.kerala.gov.in/documents/report/survey%20report/12157.pdf>. [Last accessed on 2020 Apr 20].

⁶ MSJE, 2014, Report of the Expert Committee on the issues relating to transgender persons, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.

schemes for the welfare of the marginalized communities and such schemes need to be effectively utilized for the benefits of transgender persons. The programmes like MGNREGA, NRLM, NULM, NSAP etc. have been modified so that transgender people can participate in it.

Globally, studies report employment discrimination between 20 and 57 percent, including being fired, denied a promotion or harassed (James Orr, 2008)⁷. In India, the National Human Rights Commission concluded in their report that about 92 percent of transgender are deprived of the right to participate in any form of economic activity in the country.

Even though Kerala has succeeded as the first Indian state to formulate a transgender policy in 2015, still transgender experience higher level of barriers in attaining job. Promoting participation in the government sector, the Public Service Commission in Kerala has given an option to include –third gender in the application form. The social security board has provided entrepreneur loan of Rs. 50,000 to transgender persons who are interested in self-employment. In addition, under the skill development programme training on driving, beautician course etc. were imparted to interested beneficiaries.

However, the transgender community experience multi-faceted problems (Magre, 2012)⁸. Chatterjee (2014)⁹ pointed that retaining transgender in the jobs is much important to maintain the subsistence. The attitude of the employers and co-workers also is more important as many reported that teasing or not providing enough salary or annual salary hikes similar to that of other people of common gender as a reason for shifting jobs. Some others reported that they worked without revealing their identity and while knowing it the employer expelled them from the job. A majority of LGBT people continue to hide their sexual orientation or to endure harassment out of

⁷James Orr, 2008, ‘Pregnant Man Gives Birth to Baby Girl’, *GuardianDaily*, 4 July 2008

⁸Magre, Bhupali (2012): ‘Understanding Education and Employment of Hijaras of Mumbai’, *MA thesis, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*.

⁹ChatterjeeSubhrajit, 2014, ‘Problems Faced by LGBT People in the Mainstream Society: Some Recommendations’, *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)*, Vol 1, No.5, 317-331.

fear of losing their job. A study by Saritha et al (2018)¹⁰ in Kerala revealed that 76 out of 95 transgender they have interviewed were engaged in low paid jobs. They generally engaged in jobs such as home nursing, employees in hotels, beggars, sex work, cleaning staff etc. Engagement in sex work is also predominant among them though not revealed. The study also reported that 40 percent of the respondents quit their job due to workplace harassment like teasing from employer or co-workers.

The entry into Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) in 2016 was a historical step towards mainstreaming transgender in Kerala. This has received worldwide attention and *The Guardian* also reported it. The movement was successful in recruiting 23 transgender persons in various departments in KMRL. The Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC) followed the path and invited transgender community and further renamed one of its metro stations into “The Pride Station” which is dedicated to the transgender community, fully operated by transgender people (mint).¹¹

Through their life course, a transgender person experiences large level deprivation in the work sector. As employers do not trust transgender employees, there is a lack of consistency in employment, which is a major challenge as described by Kurian and Megha (2021).¹² Transgender individuals are treated as cheap labour because of their low educational qualifications, and the absence of economic assets leads them to a financially vulnerable condition. Due to lack of policies to fight discrimination, they are forced to quit and engage in sex work for their livelihood. They are far behind in utilizing different schemes made available

¹⁰Saritha P. Viswan, Anil kumar K. and Mathew M.C, 2018, ‘Social Discrimination of Transgenders in Kerala’, *PRC report series 2018-8*, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

¹¹ Mint. (n.d.). Retrieved May 06, 2021, from mint: <https://www.livemint.com/>

¹²Kurian, Megha and GreeshmaManoj (2021), ‘Transgenders in the Mainstream: Welfare Schemes in Kerala—Kochi Metro Rail Project, Education Programme, Health Clinics, and Old-Age Pension’, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 28(2) 167–187.

for them. For example, Aneesha & Pankaj (2021)¹³ described their pathetic situation in the utilization of different financial schemes and pointed poor education, lack of financial literacy and awareness to create chaos in their life, and they get isolated from the mainstream of society. Lack of education, digital awareness, and proper ID also prevents them from enjoying the benefit of technologies and technology-based financial services like mobile banking, payment bank facilities.

In the Indian context, the tradition of blessings at weddings and births are the main earnings of transgender apart from begging and prostitution for centuries. Such a practice is not relevant in Kerala. Meanwhile, the small scale units and Self Help groups (SHGs) like Kudumbashree tried to provide a concrete job security for them. Kudumbashree not only focused on the economic empowerment but also the eradication of gender based inequalities, violations of rights, etc. The role played by the Kudumbashree in lifting the vulnerable section called third genders is dynamic. There are many examples of the great work done by the Kudumbashree. The Lakshya fruit and juice shop functioning in Ernakulam, the “ShrushtyVarnangi”, a micro-enterprise providing dance costumes in Pandalam, “Vibha, Bharatakala, Friends etc. are some such initiatives by Kudumbashree which provided a new life to transgender members. Gender taxi, restaurants with the help of SHGs, beauty parlor, dance classes etc were started to cherish in various places of the state especially in cities like Ernakulam and Thrissur where more number of transgender people are settled for a livelihood. The prolonged lock down implemented due to the pandemic has hit such movements and most of them ended in suicide or bankruptcy. Kudumbashree was also being criticized for not taking any further measures to resolve their issues.

Apart from the pride of KMRL, Kerala also have the pleasure to introduce several successful individual entrepreneurs from the transgender community. Anu and Vinshi (2018)¹⁴ has

¹³Aneesha M A&Pankaj Kumar Baag, 2021 ‘Financial Inclusion Among Transgender Community: A Perspective’, Working Paper IIMK/WPS/462/FIN/2021/05 May 2021

¹⁴AnuKuriakose&Vinshi P.K, 2018.‘The Social Upliftment of Transgenders in Kerala throughEmployment Opportunities’, Paper presented in the Conference: Transgender Rights, Mobility and Identity Held at: NSS Hindu College Changanacherry

summarized the success stories of Renju Renjimar, a professional make-up artist who have been working in the field for more than 17 years with dignity, Zara Sheikh (in IT sector) and Tripthi Shetty (received artisan card from Ministry of Textile, Government of India). There are several individual successful persons in different sectors, but the question of whether a normal transgender can avail such support to live a respectful life by engaging in a dignified job remains as significant in Kerala.

1.4 Accommodation

The transgender survey revealed (2015) that one quarter of them migrated to other districts in Kerala due to issues related to their gender identity. A person has to go through difficult conditions to survive and assess his own body changes in adolescence and many of the transgender persons who reveal their identity has to expel himself from the ancestral house. That person becomes helpless and has to find his shelter, food and other expenditure by himself. Aneesh (2017)¹⁵ revealed that most of the transgender in Kerala are staying outside home. Educational attainment, employability and productivity of transgender are highly correlated with the availability of a proper shelter. The withdrawal of nearly half of the appointed transgender persons from KMRL was mainly due to the issue of improper shelter (Sibi, K I, 2017)¹⁶. KMRL has explained their inability to provide shelter to these transgender employees. Congregation of Mother of Carmel under Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council came forward to provide accommodation to the employees at 'Jyothis Bhavan' in Ernakulam. But due to various reasons it didn't work properly. Transgender people who occupied the centre left it shortly. Societal

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327931165_The_Social_Upliftment_of_Transgenders_in_Kerala_through_Employment_Opportunities

¹⁵Aneesh MS. 2017. 'Quality of life among transgender people inKerala'. J HumanitSocSci 2017;22:19-24.

¹⁶Sibi K I, 2017, Major Concerns Of Transgender Employees In Kochi Metro Train Service Work Environment, , Volume 4, Issue 10 October,2017 JETIR www.jetir.org (ISSN-2349-5162)

stigma exists in Kerala which restricts renting houses to transgender. Costly accommodation and other expenses again spell them to vulnerable conditions including sex work.

1.5 Policy development in Kerala

The Governmental initiative began in Kerala with the 10-day long state survey, which covered 14 districts in 2014 after the historical verdict of Honourable Supreme Court in 2014. The task was assigned to ‘Sangama’, an organization working for the marginalized community. The results helped the state to formulate a state policy (2015) for the transgender persons, which is the first of its kind in India. The establishment of a justice board and India’s first school for transgender individuals as well as the introduction of scholarships, health clinics, old-age pensions, various literary programmes and a special fashion show for them were the result of the policy.

It aimed to ensure seven rights to each transgender;

1. Right to Equality
2. Freedom of Expression
3. Right to dignity and Life without violence
4. Right to Empowerment
5. Right to Equal Access to Education Services
6. Right to Equal Access to Health Services
7. Right to Voice and Participation

Adoption of new transgender policy has resulted in actions to mainstream the transgender persons namely provision of a third gender option in the application for public service commission; continuing education programme by the state literacy mission; constituted a TG cell; extended job opportunities in Kochi Metro Rail Ltd; Entrepreneur (self-employment scheme) loan of Rs.50,000 by social security board; and a 24x7 call centre for transgender community. Under the entrepreneur programme it is proposed to give 16 two- wheeler for TGs who revealed their identity and living in a Panchayat area. The social justice department in Kerala has initiated distribution of Identity cards to them.

Now, it's time to evaluate the development of the transgender policy in Kerala. Praveen (2017)¹⁷ narrated the benefits of opening a school exclusively for transgender under the programme 'Samanwaya' which helped those persons who had discontinued their studies due to harassment and discrimination. The large level withdrawal of transgender employees in KMRL was not negotiated under the umbrella of these policies. Effective measures that can be taken by different departments under Government of Kerala both individually and collaboratively were not seen in such cases as criticized by various organizations working for the welfare of transgender community. Somak Ghoshal, (2017)¹⁸ criticizes the legal system, which was not acted properly and the society which is harder to change than the law for the failure of KMRL. By discussing the Godrej Group for a well-defined pro-LGBTQ+ policies, he suggests more awareness and sturdy actions against discrimination towards transgender at work place.

1.6. KILE and Transgender Project

Kerala Institute of Labor and Employment, a research centre under Government of Kerala has initiated a continuing result oriented project for the welfare of transgender persons in 2021. Engaging transgender in different socially accepted job folios and promoting their presence in an attractive manner is vital. The project is proposed to develop strategies to engage transgender persons in mainstream job folios through continuous skill training and provide employment in public and private sector in Kerala. Screening for assessing the aptitude of the transgender persons to be trained in various courses as per their interest has been initiated by the organization at various levels.

Assessing the ongoing engagements, its merits and demerits and aptitude of current employees will provide great input to frame the training parameters of the project. As a marginalized community, transgender persons and their issues need to be studied properly especially in the

¹⁷Praveen, M. P. (2017). *Educational programme for transgender community*, The Hindu.

¹⁸SomakGhoshal 2017, 'Indian Companies Are Hiring Transgender People, But It's A Rocky Road From There, in HuffPost null https://www.huffpost.com/archive/in/entry/the-bitter-reality-of-being-a-transgender-employee-in-india_a_23035751

employment sector for formalization of strategies to enhance the skill and make them suitable for different work sectors.

1.7. Research Problem

Kerala was having the traits of marginalization and violence of rights against the third gender however; it slowly developed the mindset to embrace the queer. The issues of transgender community are multifaceted and interconnected with episodes that started from their birth itself. The level of discrimination they have experienced, years of schooling, experience of work place harassment including denial of job, payment and other benefits, status of expulsion from home, desire of sex reassignment surgery etc play vital role in determining their psychological wellbeing and their employability also. As criticized by several scholars, entry and continuity in a firm for the transgender persons does not merely depend on the person itself, rather it is determined by the attitude of the society where he/she is living.

Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) has paved way for engagement of transgender in the mainstream even by providing opportunity for interaction with public by appointing them in departments like Ticketing. The confidence it has provided the transgender community, society and entrepreneurs need to be documented. Though there is criticism over the indirect role of KMRL and not providing accommodation and other benefits, such a historical move initiated by them need appropriate recognition.

The large level dropout of employees, its multi-dimensional reasons, role of Kudumbashree and Jyothis Bhavan etc. have prime importance in modeling activities to strengthen the process of mainstreaming transgender persons in Kerala.

1.8 Objective

The present study aims to assess the work life of transgender employees in Kerala based on acceptance, availability and accommodation. Specific objectives of the study have been given below;

1. To understand the working environment of KMRL and assess the situation which led to large level dropout of transgender employees from there.
2. To document the activities of Kudumbashree mission in strengthening the transgender community particularly in the field of self-employment
3. To document the difficulties of running shelter homes for transgender community in Kerala and understand the benefits of it through the case study of ‘Jyothis Bhavan’

1.9 Data and Methods

The study has been conducted in a way to assess the struggling of transgender employees to survive in a mainstream employment sector. Interview method was adopted to collect information for the study. Case studies were prepared to reveal the real situation of transgender people in the work sector. For the better presentation of the scenario, work life of transgender in a mainstream work sector has been explained through the case study of KMRL. The self-employment and entrepreneurship among this deprived community are given through the case study of Kudumbashree. The unavailability of accommodation and trans phobia of the community are discussed through Jyothis Bhavan, which is boomed as a successful model in Kerala.

Managerial staff, co-workers, transgender workers and former workers were interviewed in KMRL for assessing the situation. Three Kudumbashree units were selected to study the working nature of Kudumbashree units exclusively for transgender. The authorities and in-mates of Jyothis Bhavan was interviewed in-order to assess the issues related to accommodation of transgender employees. The detailed methodology is given in the concerned chapters. An out-line of questions was prepared after detailed review of the situation. It was discussed among the study team and later sent to Ethical committee members of KILE for ethical clearance.

The number of persons interviewed for each section is given below;

Si. No	Category of persons	Number
<i>KMRL</i>		
1	Managerial	4
2	Kudumbashree	3
3	Immediate Supervisors	2
4	Transgender employees	9
5	Coworkers	2
6	Previous employees	4
<i>Kudumbashree</i>		
7	State level Officers	2
8	Kudumbashree CDS	1
9	Kudumbashree Units	3
<i>Jyothis Bhavan</i>		
10	Bishop	1
11	Mother-in charge	1
12	Inmates	9

Two days' workshop was organized in Kochi in which only transgender employees and ex-employees were invited. Awareness classes were organized for them which discussed their mental health issues, and necessity, side effect and effectiveness of different surgeries. Detailed information about hormone therapy was imparted in the class. Cultural programmes were also conducted for them. Trained researchers from Kile including two transgender staff were assigned the task of interviewing the transgender employees. The presence of transgender members in the interview team paved way for them to easily acquaint with the interview team. Utmost care has been given to ensure privacy during interviews. Consent of each person was also sought before starting the interview. The managerial staff and other staff in the KMRL were interviewed by visiting their office. The completed interviews were transcribed properly and major points were highlighted from each one of them. Positive and negative aspects were categorized separately for better presentation of the results.

A surprise visit was done to Jyothis Bhavan after visiting KMRL. The authorities were met and a convenient time was sought from them to meet the inmates. The Jyothis Bhavan was visited as per schedule. Cultural programs by the transgender inmates were presented on the day of visit. A friendly atmosphere was created before starting the interview. Each inmate was interviewed after getting consent. The Mother Superior was interviewed in her convenience. The then Bishop was also interviewed over telephone.

The efforts of Kudumbashree in creating self-employment among the transgender community were discussed with the State manager for Ayalkoottam (NHGs). The district officers were interviewed with an open ended schedule at their convenience. Three Self Help Groups (SHGs) under Kudumbashree exclusively for transgender were selected in Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur and Palakkad with the help of district authorities of Kudumbashree. The CDS and other members of Kudumbashree were interviewed to assess the progress of the unit.

The results are presented in separate chapters with short conclusions. KMRL and its output are presented in the first chapter of analysis. Kudumbashree as a frontrunner in establishing SHGs for transgender persons is described in the second part. The role of Jyothis Bhavan and structure of the centre is illustrated in the third part of the study.

Chapter 2

Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL)

Being a thickly populated area, Kochi always faces many difficulties in transportation, the public transport could cover only 49% of the Kochi. So the need of a better transportation system that reduces the traffic and the time increased and the discussion for the metro began in 1999. The project got approval in 2008 from the state government and in 2012 from the central government. Thus a joint venture of central and state is formed and named as Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL). Sri. E. Sreedaran, well known Engineer has been appointed as the principal advisor of KMRL during 2017.

The Hierarchy and Functioning of Kochi Metro Rail Limited

A well-established and experienced team is inevitable for this big project. The KMRL consists of a Board of Directors with 13 members and is comprised of five nominees from the Government of India, five nominees from the Government of Kerala and three functional directors. The board also constitutes various committees according to their requirements, where the Board nominates two to five directors.

The Board of Directors of KMRL

SL NO	Name of the Officer/ Designation	Status of Directors
1	Shri. Sudhir Krishna Secretary UD & Chairman, Ministry of Urban Development	Govt. of India - Nominee
2	Shri. C.K. Khaitan, Joint Secretary (L&W), Ministry of Urban Development	Govt. of India - Nominee
3	Shri. Sudhir Mittal, Advisor (Works), Railway Board	Govt. of India - Nominee
4	Shri. D.D.Pahuja, Director Rolling Stock & Signaling & Electrical, Bangalore Metro Rail Cortpn Ltd.	Govt. of India - Nominee
5	Shri. S.D.Sharma, Director (Business Development), Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd, Metro Bhawan	Govt. of India – Nominee
6	Shri. Bharat Bhushan, Chief Secretary, Secretariat	Govt. of Kerala - Nominee
7	Shri. Elias George, Managing Director, Kochi Metro Rail Ltd,	Govt. of Kerala - Nominee
8	Shri. V.P.Joy, Principal Secretary(finance), Secretariat	Govt. of Kerala - Nominee
9	Shri. V.J Kurian, Principal Secretary, Water Resources Dept., Govt. Secretariat	Govt. of Kerala - Nominee
10	Shri. Sheik Pareeth, District Collector, Ernakulam	Govt. of Kerala - Nominee
11	Shri. Mahesh Kumar Director (Projects) Kochi Metro Rail Ltd	Functional Director
12	Shri. Abraham Oommen Director (Finance) Kochi Metro Rail Ltd	Functional Director
13	Shri. Ved Mani Tiwari Director (Systems) Kochi Metro Rail Ltd	Functional Director

The Arrival of Third gender into KMRL

The KMRL placed its focal point not only in enduring the urban transport and economic enhancement but simultaneously on the societal values. It was so keen on ensuring the gender balanced recruitment. They appointed 682 women in terms of various designations like housekeeping, gardening, customer relations etc. This is one of the largest women crew appointed in a metro in the world. This historic gesture was initiated through Kudumbashree which is a women empowerment program of government of Kerala in 2016.

But a dynamic or landmark action done by the KMRL was the recruitment of transgender to the working sector. This invited the attention of the entire globe. Through this, Kochi Metro turned-out to be the first state owned company to give employment to a large number of the third gender. They were working in different sections of the metro starting from maintenance to ticketing. As the primary step, 23 transgender persons were hired to be a part of the prestigious metro rail project which can be denoted as a milestone in the history of Kerala or world.

The Significant Role played by the Kudumbashree

The role of Kudumbashree was pivotal by inviting the transgender into the metro. The authorities of metro entrusted the Ernakulam district mission of Kudumbashree to create an efficient group of transgender persons to work in the designations like housekeeping, customer relations, crowd management etc. Kudumbashree was actively engaged in this task and arranged 23 third gender workers.

Difference between theory and practice: the reality and the illusion

KMRL gave a new hope to the transgender community. But the other side of the coin was little different. For the transgender, opportunity in KMRL was considered as a way to a better standard of living through an employment. However, the output was not positive. Slowly, the transgender employees in KMRL started to drop out and the number of them declined to 11 in 2021. There were several reasons pointed out by various researchers and media like salary, transportation and accommodation. The present chapter describes the situation of transgender employees at KMRL and tries to assess the actual reasons behind large level drop out of transgender employees from job.

2.1 Objectives

Understand the working environment of KMRL is the primary objective of this chapter. The specific objectives are;

- 1) To appraise the level of satisfaction and experience of management (KMRL) regarding transgender employees
- 2) Understand attitude of other workers in KMRL towards transgender employees
- 3) Assess the situation which led to large level dropout of transgender employees from KMRL
- 4) Understand the level of social, family and individual acceptance received by transgender employees due to their work status in KMRL
- 5) Assess the role of Kudumbashree in channelizing employability among transgender
- 6) Discuss the problems related to accommodation of transgender employees in KMRL

Three sets of information have been gathered for assessing the situation at KMRL. Discussions were held with three groups of personnel;

1. Management wing including Principal Employer of transgender (Kudumbashree)
2. Co-workers of transgender
3. Transgender employees/ex-employees

Case studies have been conducted among the transgender employees by grouping them into two categories; those who are currently employed and those who had quit the firm. Detailed review of the current scenario at KMRL was done before the discussion with the staff and employer. Various factors were identified through reviewing the issue and open ended schedules were used in order to get a smooth flow during the interview. The questions were categorized into different groups to get information regarding service satisfaction, recruitment process, training, privileges, social acceptance, financial benefit etc. of the transgender employees. The integration of transgender employees to the core of the firm was also included as an important section in the discussions. The district level officers of Kudumbashree were interviewed for assessing the attitude of both transgender and KMRL for a sustainable solution to the issue.

The chapter is divided into 5 sections. The perspective of the managerial team was presented with various benefits that transgender received at KMRL followed by reasons for withdrawal. Kudumbashree members were interviewed as the principal employer and are presented in the second division. Coworkers of transgender employees were interviewed and presented in third division. Perspective of current transgender employees are described in the fourth division followed by former employees.

2.2 Results

The following section describes the perspective of different sectors of employee/employer of KMRL regarding the employment status, salary, transportation, accommodation and social uplift of transgender.

2.2.1 Management wing

The top level management team of KMRL has been interviewed for identifying the reasons behind the decline in the number of transgender workers in the firm. The enthusiastic step of inclusion of transgender in the mainstream workforce in Kerala has acclaimed international fame in the beginning. The management team collectively accepted the issues like unavailability of accommodation, transportation issues, dissatisfaction on salary etc as the major problems behind the unanticipated outcome. The team members of 'Operations and Safety' have been interviewed for assessing the situation of transgender employees in KMRL. The problems they have mentioned are classified into two broad areas and are discussed in this section.

2.2.1.1 Bright Side

KMRL was so keen on ensuring the gender balanced recruitment. They appointed 682 women in various designations like housekeeping, gardening, customer relations etc. This is considered as one of the largest women crew appointed in a metro in the world. The entry into a firm like KMRL, along with other women employees through Kudumbashree is considered a turning point in the life of transgender in Kerala. It has boosted other attempts especially in the public sector segment. The management team explained how they treated the transgender employees there without any discriminations as well as privileges. The steps taken by KMRL to the large level

inclusion of transgender workers in the core of the firm and the positive attitude it experienced through the course of employment span at KMRL are placed here;

1. **Training:** KMRL has appointed transgender workers in two departments - Housekeeping and Ticketing through Kudumbashree. They have identified the basic components like work related skills, communication, personality and money management as necessary and provided one month long special training to all the transgender applicants. It was conducted as a residential programme at Rajagiri School of Social Sciences. Selection of employees to the project was based on the performance of this training programme. One difference they noticed in between the Kudumbashree women employees and transgender was that latter did not have any written test for the selection. 'Though some of the transgender trainees were not interested to attend the full course of training, most of the trainees attended the course with good spirit' - recollected the Secretary to General Manager. Generally, they are reluctant to sit long hours in the classes, but many of them are highly talented and with good academic skills- she concluded.
2. **Feeling of oneness:** Transgender community was unknown to most of the managerial staff and the process at KMRL was the first experience for many of them. Some of the North Indian managerial staff had previous experience of working with transgender. The DGM (Operations and Safety) had two years working experience at Noida and Delhi metro where he had acquainted with transgender employees. However, the managerial staff has not frequently met with transgender employees in KMRL as the work atmosphere does not demand the same. Kudumbashree and supervisory staff were supposed to meet or assess the work of the departments where transgender are employed.

While assessing the working capacity of transgender employees, managerial staff has found no significant difference with other employees. They pointed that educated employees perform better than others and they have never noticed difference in the output of both transgender and cis-gender employees. Moreover, KMRL has never tried to provide special preferences to any section of employees. Through this approach, they have tried to establish the fact that all employees are same and considered in equal manner. Secretary to General Manager added that some rare complaints were reported in the initial period regarding the behavior of transgender employees but such issues were

solved properly. When the transgender employees were given opportunity to work with other employees, the barrier of differences were melt naturally and it created a friendly atmosphere in the workplace.

As a public sector department with social commitment, KMRL has celebrated several events including annual day programmes. The DGM happily concluded that the transgender and other employees participated in the same way in every event. No special events were conducted for transgender. Talented transgender were encouraged to perform different art forms including drama and dances. The sports events were also conducted in the same way. The treatment of KMRL to transgender employees tried to indicate the society that they are just employees in the firm and there is nothing special with their gender, concluded the managerial staff.

3. **Social Status:** Though the transgender were appointed through Kudumbashree, wide media coverage and corporate value of KMRL provided transgender employees a better social acceptance. The General Manager happily pointed that none of the transgender workers address themselves as staff of Kudumbashree. They consider their appointment as permanent one through KMRL. Even if some of them were earlier engaged in sex work for their living, they shifted to normal life and got the courage to face the world. The General Manger added that the new working atmosphere, status of the firm, reputation from the public, frequent interaction with coworkers etc supported most of the transgender workers to get confidence to lead a meaningful life.
4. **Acceptance by Family:** Majority of the transgender persons were forced to leave their ancestral home due to their gender status. The fear of society and pressure from the religious leaders persuaded the family members to expel their own son/daughter to the street. The DGM (Operations and Safety) added that the condition of transgender in the street is highly vulnerable everywhere. They are forced to do sex work for their daily living or due to peer pressure. It is important to keep them under the safety of home and provide better education to live in the society with dignity. The transgender employees joined KMRL have more than enough educational qualification required for their assigned job (Housekeeping and Ticketing).When they were assured monthly salary,

societal values through job in a reputed firm, the family members started to accept the reality of transgender community. Many of the transgender employees started to visit their family members. Some employees who were earlier worked in some other private firms said to us that earlier they did not receive such respect and acceptance from their family members. But when they became part of a reputed firm, the mindset of family members slowly changed, concluded the managerial staff.

5. **Improved living status:** The living condition of majority of the transgender was very pity. Only two members were staying with their family and others were struggling to live a proper life. They had to bear the rent of their house, cost of food and mostly the expenses of their living-together partner also. Partner violence was also experienced by most of them. The living condition never allowed them to think about the outside world and they were largely unaware of the laws regarding transgender welfare. Many of them were involved in sex work for an additional earning and involved in police cases in connection with that.

The General Manager confidently added that the entry into KMRL through Kudumbashree has given them a new life, in which they were able to improve the living status. Assured salary, frequent interaction with public, one month long training, association with high level Kudumbashree workers and supervisors and the opportunity to share the problems with others etc brightened their life. Dress code and food habits have been changed among them. Reduction in frequency of abuse of intoxicants is a major advantage they experienced in their life after the entry into KMRL.

Passengers started to identify the workers in KMRL. This has restricted many of the transgender workers who used to go for sex work. The status transgender received in their life was mainly due to their entry into KMRL.

6. **Harmony in work and life:** The transgender employees joined KMRL have more than enough educational qualification required for their assigned job (Housekeeping and Ticketing). Their aspiration to attain better segments in KMRL is well recorded here, added Secretary to General Manager. However, as per the condition, transgender

employees were allowed to work in two departments only. For the better inclusion of them to the core of the society and firm, one transgender was appointed in the administrative wing. She pointed out that through the transgender employee at the administrative office, all the managerial staff was getting a chance to mingle with her (TG employee). This has optimistically influenced the mindset of other employees and has reduced the stigma among them towards transgender employees. Moreover, the key roles handled by transgender employees persuaded others to mingle daily with them. These situations led the creation of a harmonious work atmosphere in KMRL, which overall accelerated the inclusion of transgender into the core of society.

7. **Welcome back:** The General Manager was open to welcome back those transgender employees who quit KMRL due to various reasons. He stated that more than half of the transgender workers quit KMRL are living in miserable conditions. Some of them persuaded to engage in sex work again for their living. A few of them quit the firm immediately after their appointment and may not be aware of the benefit of working in a firm like this. KMRL has initiated to reinstall those transgender workers and preliminary discussions were held with Kudumbashree.

8. **Social responsibility:** It was reported that some of the transgender employees did not maintain the office rules like punctuality, intimation before taking leaves, non usage of mobile phones during working hours etc. KMRL considered the problems of transgender in a way to take them in confidence and constituted a coordination committee to discuss their problems with Kudumbashree. The management team is aware of the unavoidable reasons of these employees like side effects of hormone therapy, rest needed after surgery and instable accommodation facility due to community pressure from their neighbours. They want to solve such issues by ensuring long term job security for transgender in KMRL. The accommodation problem has been highlighted to the Government of Kerala and an amount has been transferred to the transgender employees through Kudumbashree. He pointed that such efforts will continue to improve the quality of life of transgender employees of the firm.

2.2.1.2 Grey side

1. **No direct link:** The management team unanimously stated that there was no direct link between KMRL and transgender employees at any time. Appointment of transgender workers in the ticketing and housekeeping wing was the sole responsibility of Kudumbashree mission. They were given contract for these two departments. It was Kudumbashree who selected, trained and appointed transgender persons in these departments along with other women workers. However, KMRL was closely associated with all these processes from its initiation. It ensured proper screening of all applicants, tests were properly conducted and ensured training also. The DGM of 'Operations and Safety' at KMRL who has not joined in the firm at the time of appointment of transgender persons, accepted that due to the appointment of transgender, KMRL has got special media coverage and it has boosted their confidence in the beginning itself. They expected a smooth worklife without any issues with transgender. He clarified that apart from the massive dropout due to various personnel reasons, they have assured a non-discriminated worklife at KMRL to all the employees. During the process, though transgender have raised the demand for direct employment, it was not at all considered as it was not in the purview of KMRL. The General Manager of 'Operations and Safety' has said that they were always keen to hear from transgender employees and ensured monthly meetings with all employees. He however, dismissed the demand for inclusion of transgender as the permanent employees in KMRL and added that ticketing and housekeeping was outsourced to Kudumbashree and division within the group will destroy the harmony there.
2. **Accommodation:** Unavailability of accommodation facilities has emerged as a major reason for the droop-out of transgender employees at KMRL. The issue was not considered during the preliminary discussion of deploying transgender neither by KMRL nor Kudumbashree. The management has requested Kudumbashree for making accommodation arrangements. Sahaja Social Welfare and Charitable Society (SSWCS) were approached for arranging their accommodation at Kochi. The General Manager of Operations has stated that the attitude of locals towards transgender was not positive and they were denied accommodation facilities in Kochi. The fear of public towards transgender as well as social issues like concentration of trans people in the area and anxiety over sex work also played major roles in denying accommodation to transgender employees. However, with the combined efforts of both

Kudumbashree and KMRL, individual houses were identified in the locality and transgender employees were accommodated there. The General Manager (GM) of 'Operations and Safety' reiterated that these efforts became ineffective as disputes emerged between transgender employees and house owners over various issues including timing of arrival and complaints from locals regarding their behaviour. There were complaints over sensitive nature and short temperedness of transgender persons. He added that only few instances were reported but it received wide circulation and hence further efforts in this regard were not initiated by KMRL and Kudumbashree.

Jyothis Bhavan, a charitable organization run by nuns in the Congregation of Mother of Carmel (CMC) under Ernakulam Vimala Province has come forward to provide accommodation to transgender employees in the KMRL. The Mother in-charge of the Bhavan had working experiences with transgender persons when she was in Mumbai. They were providing shelter to transgender students at Kochi. The General Manager reported that when asked for assistance they were ready to provide dormitory accommodation for transgender employees. He termed it as bliss as transgender persons were safe and Bhavan allowed KMRL staff to enter till 10.30 PM though their regular timing was 7 in the evening. When the demand for admission of partners of transgender rose, Bhavan was ready to accommodate them in the dormitory arrangement. But they really wanted personal accommodation and shortly entire transgender employees left Bhavan. They were not happy with the dormitory accommodation and the strict timing of the Bhavan. Moreover, they needed privacy also. With the failure of Jyothis Bhavan experiment, all the employees started to find their own accommodation at Kochi, which was more costly and accelerated the withdrawal of the transgender employees, added the General Manager.

3. **Conveyance:** Transgender employees in the KMRL were forced to find accommodation in the outskirts of Kochi. KMRL was not able to provide conveyance to them as they were coming from different places. The difficulty was doubled when the firm introduced night shift. The General Manager recollected that the demand for transportation at night rose among the transgender employees but KMRL was not ready to provide it. The travel in the early morning and late night were hard for them. The taxi rate was very high at these off

time and public transportation services were also infrequent. The Secretary to General Manager who was associated with transgender employees from the beginning itself, added that as per the rule, the firm has to provide transportation to female employees from 9 PM to 6 AM. But the condition was not applicable to them as their working time starts from 6 in the morning only.

4. **Night Shift:** Attitude of the society will be different at night especially to marginalized community, stated the GM and added that the transgender employees had experienced misbehaviour from persons of different segments. It was mainly due to the belief of the public and police that transgender are waiting in the bus stops for seeking clients for sex work. They were forced to travel off time at night for their work. The Secretary to GM recollected one incidence when a transgender employee was warned at the bus stop by a policeman politely but in the presence of other cisgender persons. He advised her to quit the place and warned against sex work at that area. The worker got ashamed and replied him that she is back to home after her duty at KMRL. At last, she was forcefully removed from the place. Such incidences have forced transgender workers to get rid of night shifts. The request was positively considered by the firm. Transgender employees were excluded from night shift. But still they have to travel after 9 PM to reach home and early morning to attend the office at 6 AM. Persons used to approach transgender for sex work when they were waiting for bus at bus stops in the night. The negative attitude of public adversely affected their confidence to lead a respectable life with the job. Many of them quit the job due to these issues, added collectively the managerial staff.

5. **Salary:** The salary criteria for the outsourced staff were decided by the Kudumbashree and both women and transgender workers were considered equally by them. Now on an average, those in the Ticketing wing is getting Rs. 18700 per month and those engaged in Housekeeping is getting Rs. 17333. Yearly 10 percent wage hike is also ensured to all the staff. The consolidated amount is disbursed once in a month. Provident fund and ESI contribution are levied from their monthly salary and employer contribution is provided by the KMRL through Kudumbashree. Secretary to GM recollected the demand from transgender that they need disbursal of salary on a daily manner to meet their daily household expenses. Such a demand was

genuine but KMRL was not able to disburse the salary on a daily basis. The financial constraints of transgender persons are multi-faced and they were the principal bread winners of the single member family. Sometimes, they have to take care of their partner also. She further pointed towards their poor socio-economic background which disable them from attaining basic amenities and hence requirement of assistance from employer. Of the 21 transgender workers appointed in the firm, only two were supported by their family and living in their own house. She pointed towards the cost of hormone therapy which most of the transgender workers are undergoing. Along with that, they have to take medicines on daily basis and some of them who had undergone surgery had to repay a huge amount to others. Apart from this sympathetic attitude, KMRL was helpless to grant special financial assistances to transgender employees. KMRL clarified the situation by saying that *‘transgender are part of Kudumbashree like other women outsourced workers engaged in Ticketing and Housekeeping departments. Principal employer of them is Kudumbashree and KMRL has no direct responsibility over them. Initially there was a misunderstanding among them that they were directly recruited by KMRL’*. Some media portrayed the event in such a way and when transgender employees realized that they were not directly appointed by KMRL, some of them had resigned, concluded the management wing.

6. Working atmosphere and behaviour: The management team ensured equality among all the workers in KMRL. The General Manager has pointed that they never treated any person differently in the firm. No separate meetings were conducted for any section of workers. Trainings were equally conducted for all the workers. The DGM of ‘Operations’, reiterated that special training were required at some point of time to improve the quality of service especially by transgender employees. But such trainings were also conducted along with other Kudumbashree workers so that transgender do not get the feeling that they are targeted in the firm. The authorities have tried to remove the misunderstanding of transgender employees about their recognition at KMRL, but many of them believe that they were betrayed by the authorities.

The short temperedness of transgender was another issue pointed out by the managerial team. The secretary to General Manager sympathetically pointed towards the sufferings

transgender experience in their whole life and added that such bitter experience may have affected their short tempered nature. One such incidence was recollected in which a transgender argued to the higher level staff for their permanency in the firm. It was mainly due to their belief that they were directly recruited by the KMRL. Inconsistency of the transgender workers attending the office was also raised by the managerial staff. As a co-operative firm managing tens of thousands of commuters on a daily basis, professional work culture is required in KMRL. The Secretary to General Manager recollected that at some occasions, transgender employees had taken leave without any intimation and it had affected the service to public. These unauthorised absence sometimes extend to more than one month. She clearly pointed that such circumstances and unprofessional behavior affects the service delivery of the firm. Transgender people (some of them) need to be trained for corporate behaviour. Demand for special rights for transgender has also come from them which was not encouraged by KMRL and she concluded that such situation might have given the idea that transgender employees are ill-treated at KMRL and led to the withdrawal of some of the transgender employees.

2.2.2 Principal Employer (Kudumbashree)

Kudumbashree is the principal employer of transgender workers. Kudumbashree was outsourced to handle two departments – Ticketing and Housekeeping in KMRL. The then District Coordinator of Kudumbashree recollected that inclusion of transgender came into the discussion due to the concern of the then District Superintendent of Police. He asked Kudumbashree to consider adapting transgender persons located in Ernakulam in the KMRL. The then Director of KMRL, Alias George, was also favourable to transgender persons. This step was taken to solve a police case against some transgender persons who were collecting money in the trains. The authorities never wanted to allow such culture by transgender in Kerala, which is prevailing in other states. Kudumbashree has never hesitated to the idea of inclusion of transgender in KMRL, she clarified. Identifying transgender was the basic issue, for which the district police unit also helped. NGOs working in this field were also sought for help. Primary selection of transgender was done based on their non-criminal background. As transgender persons from other districts also concentrate in

Ernakulam to make a livelihood, it was not an easy task to realize the background details of each transgender.

The team has suggested special **training** for transgender and it was provided at Rajagiri. During the training process, she pointed that some of the transgender members have not carefully followed the contents. Special focus was given to Yoga, Dhyanam etc to overcome the stress they experience over their life. It was really meant to control the short temperedness of transgender, she shared. However, such practices have not been continued when they entered in service.

Kudumbashree was also aware of the issue of **accommodation** facility for transgender in Kochi. She exclaimed that even the trade name of KMRL doesn't work among the public to felicitate accommodation facility for transgender. The so-called 'transphobia' is higher in the city. At the same time, these transgender are approached for sex by the city dwellers'. Jyothis Bhavan model convent accommodation is not accepted by the transgender employees as it limits their individual freedom. She suggested providing a separate flat or shelter home in each district for the accommodation of transgender by the Government. Earlier Department of Social Justice has proposed to provide accommodation assistance to transgender and the same may be initiated through Kudumbashree for better implementation.

Monthly remuneration of transgender employees was fixed on par with other Kudumbashree employees in KMRL. It was a policy decision by the KMRL to treat all the contractual labourers equally. After deduction of provident fund and ESI contributions, a transgender is getting Rs. 13000/- as monthly salary from KMRL. The then district coordinator of Kudumbashree pointed out the difference between women coming to KMRL from their own house with those transgender who has to pay a large amount for lodging. Similarly, they were not encouraged for other jobs and many of them were forced to sex work for their daily living. Due to the pressure from their **family and community** many of the transgender have dressed like men and tried to project their masculine nature, though it hurts them deeply.

‘**Attitude** of firm changes when the top level leadership changes’, pointing towards dropout of more transgender from KMRL, she clarified that the then MD accommodated transgender to KMRL as a social responsibility of the firm. Though, transgender didn’t receive any special assistance from the managing team, the sympathetic attitude and openness to hear them helped transgender employees to survive the initial hurdles. She recollected the love and affection received from the transgender during her course of time there. They really want to be heard by someone. When the top level leadership changed in KMRL, the social responsibility disappeared and they focused merely on output. Even Kudumbashree also disowned them. The compassion to transgender slowly disappeared in KMRL. A medium of grievance redressal need to be established for the transgender employees.

A fellow team leader of transgender belongs to Kudumbashree described her experience with transgender and clarified that she felt nothing different in them. She portrayed the love and affection received from each transgender employee. In the beginning it was difficult to interact with them due to two reasons, she continued – we ourselves were nervous to interact with them, as we were unfamiliar with such persons. Secondly, the short temperedness of transgender was really frightening us. Any trait of act which the transgender feel they are being separated from others, they react vigorously. We needed immense patience to interact with them, she concluded. They always like praising them. I got good support from my family and there were no hesitation from them, she replied to a question on whether she received family support to work with transgender. Regarding aptitude and capacity of transgender employees, she said, it is similar to a coin with two sides, some of them work with whole heart and some does not do that. I found no difference among them with other employees. But from some third gender, a number of fellow workers had bitter experiences. They were not realistic about their temporary nature of work here.

One of the major reasons behind the dropout of the transgender is the insufficient salary amount, which was not enough for them to meet their personal needs. Their expectations were very high. Some of them wanted to update them according to the changing trends of the society. They really like to live a modern life which the salary amount does not permit. However, some were really happy with their salary, she explained the situation.

Overall, the entry into KMRL has uplifted the social status of each transgender here. They received vast social acceptance. The third gender got many fellow workers whom they can share their feelings and emotions. Another important fact is that they started to come out of their shell. It increased their confidence to face and mingle with the general public. They became more open and have no hesitation to join in all shifts, she added.

It is regretful that only two of them stay with their family. But even after getting reputation based on the job in KMRL, and good earnings, none of them returned to their family or were called back by their relatives. We felt really sorry for them.

Kudumbashree was asked to provide the contact numbers of those transgender who left KMRL. They were keen to know the reasons behind their withdrawal from the firm. However, we are not aware of the output of this inquiry, added the team leader.

2.2.3 Co-workers of Transgender employees

The experiences, the common people like co-workers of transgender employees went through their work span at KMRL is highly valuable in analysing the community attitude towards transgender and to formulate measures to alleviate the hurdles in mingling with them. Generally, the women Kudumbashree members who were appointed along with transgender employees were little bit worried and scared to work with the so-called third gender community at KMRL. It was their first acquaintance with a transgender. Not only the Kudumbashree workers, but also their family members were concerned about the presence of transgender employees. However, they took it as a learning experience in their life. The short temperedness of transgender was really worrying the co-workers. At the same time, the antagonism between the two genders has reduced rapidly within a short period of time, and they became good friends.

Working experience with transgender has helped the other members to largely accept the nature of transgender people. It has given them the confidence to face and talk to transgender persons in the street or neighbourhood whom they meet. The work-life has given them the opportunity to go out with transgender employees especially for some special functions. This has reduced transgender's fear of being noticed by public. The behaviour of transgender is termed as similar to other persons as people observe nothing special in their behaviour.

Co-workers of transgender point towards less salary given to them as the major reason for their dropout in KMRL. The salary amount was not sufficient for transgender employees as they have to meet their food, accommodation, travel and cost of medicines etc. They concluded that though they were not given any training regarding interacting with transgender, it was quiet natural for them to mingle with them as they are normal as each one of them.

A 29 year old Kudumbashree worker who has completed 10th class of education, resides in a rural village in the outskirts of Kochi shared her experience with the transgender colleagues at KMRL. 'It was a fresh experience and I was seeing for the first time a transgender in my whole life when I joined KMRL. I was really scared to talk to them and even my family members were worried in my condition. As it was a reputed job in KMRL, I decided to experiment it (she laughed!). However, it changed within a couple of days. My prejudiced mind started to talk and hear them. I used to feel bad for them when they describe their miserable life. They are just like one among us.

Initially, I was little bit worried to work with them due to their short temperedness. Now we are good friends. Some of them are familiar with my family circle also. At first, my family was anxious to know my situation here, but when we became friends, they are also happy. I showed some pictures with them. They behave decently. They are one among us. Once we went outside for the house warming function of a colleague and I never felt that they have some distinction from us. We work together, eat together, and share food and even getting the same salary. We have nothing to do with their gender status.

Some of them get angry quickly. But we can understand that. I use to behave accordingly if they are angry (she smiled). They are not like fighting or getting angry every time. Their treatment (hormone therapy) also affects their behavior. They never create any issue simply with us or with any outsider. Everybody used to get angry. Even I used to get angry. That is so natural, she explained.

The salary amount was not adequate for them as they have to meet their own accommodation, food, dress, and transportation along with their medicines. They used to complain us about the salary. They requested the authorities also. But nothing happened.

I don't think that a person needs training to interact with a transgender. As like a normal stranger person, it will be difficult at first to understand them, and later everything will be normal. That's my experience. I never ignored them, or avoided. I got back the same love and affection from them.

2.2.4 Transgender employees

Of the 21 transgender employees only 11 are presently working in KMRL. Nine transgender employees attended the two day workshop at Kochi and generally discussed the benefits and issues of their work-life there. They gave details of their salary, status, social up-gradation, satisfaction, betrayal, side-lining by authorities, exclusion by Kudumbashree etc in the discussion. Each employee was personally met after the workshop to assess their own view on their work life in KMRL.

Table 2.1 Major stumble blocks and benefits of transgender employees in KMRL

	Stumble blocks	Benefits
	Costly accommodation	Social status
	Side-lining by KMRL	Friendship with colleagues
	Less salary in KMRL	Better living status
	Attitude of Kudumbashree	Leave off sex work
	Transphobia	Feeling of oneness

2.2.4.1 Stumble blocks

The currently employed transgender persons at KMRL pointed out several reasons behind their poor status, and non-fulfilment of the eagerly presented project for the welfare of the said community. They claimed that the worldwide coverage received through the appointment of transgender employees was only a media hype and that gave benefits to KMRL only. Generally, they shared the feeling of being side lining by KMRL through Kudumbashree. It was unanimous that the condition of transgender has improved little through the work-life in KMRL as expected.

1. Lack of accommodation:

Transgender employees appointed in KMRL largely belonged to other districts. *‘Most of us were asylum seekers in Ernakulam from other districts. Our gender status provoked our own family members and others in our community and we were forced to find our accommodation in this city’*, described the situation by a transgender employee. Along with the entry into KMRL, the issue of accommodating transgender in the nearby places arose due to different shifts in the firm. *‘If we talk about the failure of the KMRL project, the main reason is accommodation, it remains as our main issue till now’*, added an employee. The employees requested KMRL and the State Government for a proper accommodation facility for them. *‘But we could not even meet them directly and explain our situation’*, complained an employee and described the event in which the authorities havenot allowed them to meet the then Chief Minister, who arrived for a function in the city in connection with KMRL. They had prepared a memorandum to the Chief Minister but were denied to even handover the same. KMRL has tried to find some accommodations with the help of Kudumbashree but were not suitable for them. The available accommodations in the city were very costly. *‘From the petite income from KMRL, how can we stay there?’*, asked an employee. The transgender were forced to stay in such rented houses and a lions’ share of their monthly income was spent for it. Moreover, their new status– ‘employee of Kochin Metro’, barred them to stay in slums or other such places.

Meanwhile, as a solution to their housing issue, Kudumbashree has arranged shelter at Jyothis Bhavan. A transgender employee illustrated the experiment as an utter failure and has pointed that the situation there was not suitable for employees working in various shifts. *‘First of all, it doesn’t provide privacy for us. Only dormitory accommodation was given to us. An outsider cannot understand the issue among transgender persons. They consider all of us in the same manner. There are persons who underwent surgery, partially done the same, under hormone therapy and those who are only initiated the same. Some of them are still males. Then how can we stay in the same room with dormitory accommodation, sharing the same bathroom and without dressing room for us to change our dress’*, asked the transgender employees. *Changing our dress in front of*

others will be awkward for us especially for the people who did their surgery like me, added the employee. I have my own privacy, it should be valued. How can I stay with other men and get undressed in front of them, asked an employee by weeping.

Jyothis Bhavan admits inmates only up to 8 O'clock in the night. This has created issues for the transgender. *The last train will be departing by 10:50 pm. I will be reaching there by 11:30 pm. Gate of Bhavan will be closed by 8pm. They will be questioning us for coming late, this was our situation there,* added an employee. Hence all the employees who got shelter there quit and found suitable accommodation.

The transgender staff collectively pointed that KMRL can provide them a building in the metro premises itself to solve the issue of accommodation. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund may be used for this. But they have not shown any interest in it.

2. Sidelined by KMRL

Transgender employees generally have a feeling that they have been betrayed by the KMRL and have been exploited by them for publicity of KMRL. Transgender community in the city got surprised by the decision to include transgender persons in the core of KMRL. Most of them were unaware of the reasons behind their inclusion. Those who engaged in other works were attracted largely to the beauty and safety of KMRL. *'We thought our lives are going to change. We expected a reputed social status in the society'*, added an employee with disappointment.

Transgender persons started to understand the realities when the selection board/ team considered them only for the two low level categories - Housekeeping and Ticketing, without taking account of their educational qualifications or experience. After completion of training only, they came to know that they were appointed as contract staff under Kudumbashree and not by KMRL. This decision has received wide opposition from transgender members and some of the trained persons quit the job. KMRL has cleared their stand through a statement that the two sections in the firm have already been

outsourced to Kudumbashree and KMRL has no direct link to the appointment of transgender. Some of the transgender members who are well educated and well versed in handling administrative activities and some others who are interested in technical part of the metro wanted to be placed in such sectors. But KMRL denied such elevations as it was not their policy. Moreover, KMRL doesn't want to be enter in the internal matters of Kudumbashree. However, denial of such benefits made every transgender to feel that they were really betrayed by the establishment.

As a transgender employee, I feel pity to myself that we are continuing here as a second class employees. Among us, there are several educated employees like me. I have completed my post-graduation and also worked in administrative departments of other reputed firms. KMRL has a transgender policy which permits us to be engaged in only two departments. We need a person in the office who can understand the feeling of a transgender. Why won't they provide us a chance to apply for higher posts in KMRL, asked an employee with heated feelings.

The employees also shared their feeling that the funds provided by various agencies, including the Government of Kerala for the benefit of transgender employees has been utilized for other activities and neither KMRL nor Kudumbashree has taken the initiative for materializing the proposed welfare projects for transgender. *Instead of ensuring basic amenities for us, they have conducted art festival or food festival,* complained an employee.

3. Pay and benefits :

The employees complained that they were denied the scale of payment assured to them in the beginning. Most of them pointed that the lower salary paid to them is insufficient to meet their daily expenditure. *'We were persuaded to go back to sex work for daily livelihood. Is it the benefit of working in a reputed central government firm'*, asked an employee with anger. During the training period, a monthly salary of Rs. 15000/-, with food and accommodation was offered to transgender employees, as per their argument.

Along with that, one month long residential training was also necessary for the job. All the transgender workers attended the training. *KMRL has denied us the assured salary. Food and accommodation facility was also denied. When we asked them to keep the word, they denied it and asked us to provide evidence of their assurance. Is it possible to record all the words? They have recorded the entire training programme. So this will be with them,* argued an employee, which was supported by her colleagues.

The daily living cost of a transgender employee and a Kudumbashree employee in the same category is extremely different. A Kudumbashree woman worker is supported by her family and she might not be the principal breadwinner of her family. In the case of transgender employees, they have to bear the entire expenditure of his/her family including food and accommodation. The cost of hormone therapy and its side effects have largely affected them. This situation forced some of the employees to go back to street for earnings. After stopping for a while, they again started to engage in sex work. They are little bit worried that the fame of metro will be a hurdle for them to engage in sex work. *‘To be frank, I am leading a miserable life. I am getting nine thousand to ten thousand as my salary from metro. I have to pay eight thousand as my flat rent and again I have to spend for my food. After finishing my work in metro I go home and change my uniform and go to the streets for my further earnings. My people (colleagues) use to notice me and even come and ask me about this. I am scared because I have to go back and work there again with them. It is actually a kind of mental distress. I am getting aged, after losing my health and beauty; no one will look after me. Once a customer (during sex work) recognized and asked my status in KMRL, cried a 45 year old transgender employee. ‘We are working round the clock..... (she laughed with tears in her cheeks).*

KMRL has failed to provide basic amenities to its staff, complained a transgender employee by pointing the unavailability of staff toilet in metro stations. They demand for separate toilet for transgender employees and realize the unavailability of toilet even exclusively for all staff. At stations they are persuaded to use the same toilet for

passengers. The risk of sexual harassment increases when a transgender person enters the common toilet, they argued.

They commemorated a police raid occurred in the hotel where most of the transgender employees were staying. One day, suddenly police raided the hotel on the basis of a complaint of the neighbours. Some of the transgender were preparing to go for their shift in metro. Some were on the way to their hotel. Police arrested 5 transgender employees from the hotel. All of them were removed from KMRL. One employee who was on the way to hotel described that – *‘I was just 15 minutes distance from my way back from work. When I reached the hotel, police were taking my colleagues including my roommate with charge of prostitution. I was totally ruined by the scene. I just missed the jail by 15 minutes (laughed). Police sealed the hotel and we the inmates were even not allowed to take our dresses from there. I knocked several doors in that night for a shelter. We all had the id card of KMRL but nothing helped us that night. Net effect was job loss for those 5 persons’.*

They expect necessary action from the Government to assure them a better living arrangement.

4. **Attitude of Kudumbashree:**

Transgender employees in KMRL come under the broad category of Kudumbashree workers. The difference is with their status of sex only. The transgender workers in general complained that Kudumbashree has disowned them. When they raised issues regarding their salary, transportation, weekly off etc Kudumbashree was not willing to support such issues. However, they benefitted through the agitation lead by transgender workers for these issues.

A transgender employee pointed that employees under Kudumbashree were not eligible for weekly off and they were getting wages for the days they had worked only. Such a demand came from the transgender employees and through different strategies like press

meetings, Youtube videos, KMRL agreed to provide weekly paid off to each employee. They complained that such a move had been never supported by Kudumbashree as a whole or by any of its members. However, through transgender they also got the benefit.

They pointed out that Kudumbashree has to understand the socio-economic and psychological background of each transgender employee. Each transgender person has a dream on his/her sexuality. The difficult journey to achieve that need to be supported, pointed an employee. Hormone therapy, different sex surgery etc has psychological impacts on them. Neither Kudumbashree nor KMRL considered these factors but asked transgender employees to act as normal persons during the treatment period. 'An option for medical leave needs to be included here', requested an employee.

Kudumbashree workers were watching our agitations without joining us and received all the benefits without sharing the pain. Demand for providing cab for the women and transgender staff to attend night shift were accepted by the firm after a long protest. '*We received no help from them but they are enjoying it now*', added an employee. '*When I started campaign for cab service for night shift, Kudumbashree warned me about consequences of an agitation*', pointed the leader of that campaign. She described one event in which she was forced to wait at Maharajas (one of the metro stations) after her duty time at 11 PM. She waited for her scheduled cab. That girl waited there till 2 AM. Later she picked a taxi and paid Rs.1500/- for that. However, Kudumbashree was not ready to reimburse the amount. After long debate they have refunded a portion of that.

The management and coordinators of Kudumbashree has changed their attitude towards transgender people. The caregiver attitude of the firm has been changed during the period. They shared this feeling by describing their condition during the time of deluge and pandemic. '*All were affected by the flood of 2018, but neither Kudumbashree nor KMRL has provided us any assistance, even free ration. Kudumbashree workers won't raise any demand as the income from KMRL is an additional one for their household while it is essential for us. During the long lockdown period, no salary was paid. We were*

starving and after approaching the honourable court only, we received free kit from the state government’.

5. Trans-phobia :

The transgender employees consider themselves as a minority group in KMRL. Some of them received good treatment from there. The general picture a transgender experienced in KMRL is its masculine nature. They have travelled a long journey from their own home through different sectors of the society and dejected life in streets. *‘We never need any special consideration, but bullying may be avoided’*, added a 49 year old employee. The KMRL has viewed transgender people through its masculine point and side-lined them. The north Indian management team which had seen transgender people in streets and trains there, judged them in the same way. *‘We never need any privileges, rather status of a normal employee here’*, they pointed. *For the past four years, I have been working here. The security personnel still look at us as aliens. Some of them are familiar to us from its initiation, but had never spoken to us. The pity is that, when we complain for some points to the higher authorities, who are highly educated, instead of hearing us; their face will reflect their scorned attitude to us. If the educated one responds like this what can we expect from others?*

Transgender staff working in ticketing were advised by KMRL to talk softly to the passengers. The transition they are undergoing might not be familiar for the supervisory or managerial staff. It will take several years and long treatment processes for a transgender to get her desired voice. Even after surgery and other treatments, some transgender persons sound like man. Lack of knowledge of higher level staff put them in wretched condition.

Strict conditions were implemented on transgender employees as to regulate discipline at KMRL. One among them was penalty of Rs. 500/- using mobile phone during working hours. Similarly, a register was kept for the usage of toilet also.

Not only the colleagues or higher authorities in KMRL, the outer world also needs to understand the transgender persons. Through the uplift of job in KMRL, they tried to make believe themselves that their social status has improved. They became respectable in the society where they are living. But still they experience, ill treatment from police personnel, house owners and auto or taxi drivers. *'When will this attitude change?'*, asked a middle aged transgender employee.

2.2.4.5 Benefits

The new arena opened to transgender employees by KMRL has significant importance in modelling not only the current employees but also those in the identification stages of their sexual uniqueness. It has provided new dimensions to their life.

1. Social Status

The status of employment at KMRL has given them a higher level social rank in the society. *'All believe that we are always engaged in sex work and seeking for customers. When appointed in metro, others started to look at us with a feeling of respect'*, pointed a 50 year old transgender woman with pride. It has also enhanced their personnel capacity to meet others and talk with confidence, revealed one transgender employee who currently leads the life of a man for the benefit of family. She/He continued, *'I have never been a part of such a big crowd. I always stay reserved. Because, whenever we go outside we always get mocked and abused by the society. I was always a laughing stock. I even tried cutting my veins because of this humiliation. I got married with one of my mother's relatives whom I know since my childhood due to the pressure of my family. We have no kids yet. For people like us, this initiation is a blessing. I am a 6th failed person. I could not find any job, but here I got a job in the House Keeping section. We are also getting help for our education. All these factors are so new to my life. Working in metro is a real happiness for me, and also I have never been to any other place like this. That factor also makes me happy. I never liked to mingle with people. I was not a talkative person. After coming to metro I became friendly with everyone. I am really happy for this change in my life'*.

The uplift in the living status of transgender brought by KMRL and Kudumbashree is enormous. Earlier, most of them were staying in slum area or in pitiable conditions. The job in KMRL persuaded them to keep the status of their post. Hence, many of them shifted to flats, though it costs them more. The people nearby started to recognize them. It gave them a good position and moreover acceptance to a marginalized group for the past several decades. The historical makeover of this community needs to be properly documented. The masculine orthodox society started to accept the truth of third gender and its significance in all the sectors of labour market.

2. Friendship with colleagues

The daily acquaintance with Kudumbashree women workers, supervisors, and security personnel smothered the body language, shyness and short temperedness of most of the transgender workers engaged in Housekeeping. The office atmosphere experienced by many of them made them more polite. Sharing of day to day experiences, issues to the colleagues was a huge relief for most of them. Another important feature is the interaction with passengers especially for those posted in Ticketing section. The respect received from passengers and the value of service provided to them boosted the confidence level of transgender workers. *‘Most desirable thing is the recognition from most of the passengers. They started to identify and wished us whenever we meet outside the metro. Generally, people stared us when they met us in public places especially during daytime. The prejudiced mindset of general public is changing slowly and this is the wonder what we eagerly wanted to happen in our life’*, happily said an employee.

The collective activities organized by KMRL during special occasions paved way for mutual understanding among the workers. It melted the huge misunderstanding of each category of employees to others. The artistic transgender persons received wide acceptance in the programs organized by KMRL. They got wonderful opportunities to perform to a wide audience. Recognition by KMRL, Kudumbashree and passengers supported transgender to come out of the shells.

Travelling together to and fro for attending duty, managing the station together, attending personnel functions with cisgender colleagues etc boosted the transgender to the core of

society and helped them to go in tandem with the changing life. *‘When one of my female colleagues invited to attend a personal function in her home, I was really surprised. Till that time, many of us were avoided from functions in our own home. They will ask us to keep away from the place for some days. But it was really heartening one. I went there with a gift to greet the newborn. Family members of my friend also welcomed me. I realized the dignity I received through my position in KMRL, cheerfully recollected a transgender staff, aged 36.*

3. Better living status

Regular income from KMRL helped the transgender to strengthen their living arrangement. Hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery are the main aims of each transgender in their life. They have to go through different stages to gather money for these treatments. After attaining entry into KMRL, people were ready to give loan to a transgender person.

As already mentioned, living arrangement has been modified and many of them have shifted to better facilities. Someone pointed out reduction in partner violence as another benefit of working in a big firm. Opportunities to discuss such issues with higher level staff and awareness on laws regarding transgender rights etc empowered each of the employees.

Some of them even pointed that it gave them a good opportunity to wear modern dresses and show off it to their colleagues. The in-depth desire of them to get dressed as a woman was fulfilled here. Steady income from KMRL has helped some of them who were in pitiest conditions to improve their health and wellness.

4. Leave off sex work:

Transgender persons were labeled in general as sex workers by the outside community. There were several reasons for them to be engaged in sex work. The most important among them was livelihood. The socio-economic and psychological factors that bar a transgender person to engage in mainstream job sector are vast and long existing also.

Most of the transgender person desire to undergone sex reassignment surgery and the prerequisite for the same is the prolonged hormone therapy. Both these costs large amounts and they have to make it by their own. However, the financial stability they received through their job in KMRL strengthened financially so that they decided to earn the same through hard work. *'It is painful to live in this society with the label of a sex worker. KMRL has given us an opportunity to escape from this and live the life with dignity'*, pointed a 42 year aged transgender who was formerly forced to earn money from sex work in the city.

The acquaintance with other members in the firm also restricted some of the transgender workers to quit their previous job. The presence of colleagues and familiar passengers limited their waiting in the bus stop or streets for clients for sex work. Such restrictions slowly forced them to stay away from sex work.

5. Feeling of Oneness:

It is the most important benefit they received through their job at KMRL. The one month long training at Rajagiri gave them companionship of another transgender. Having someone with the same identity made them happy and started to share their feelings and sorrows. When shared, the miserable life of each person enlighten with expectations in the future. *'I never had a good friendship with anyone in my life. At Rajagiri, I met several persons like me and understood that I am not alone in this world. KMRL has given us a chance to find our own members and for the first time in my life I got an intimate friend to share everything. Though we are posted in different stations, we all are connected through social media and now we have our own organizations. It helps the newcomers in the community to keep away themselves from abuse and dangerous situations'*, described a transgender coming from a hilly terrain.

Transgender people fought together for their benefits at KMRL. They selected one person to represent them in the official meetings though it's unofficial. As their issues are identical, the bond developed among them got strengthened during these years.

2.2.4.3 Case studies: 1 Name: X

A 46 year old transwoman revealed her story and the success she gained in her life through education. She was comfortable in the company of females and slowly people in the area started to call her 'Akkacchi', a word resembles 'Chakka' or queer. After completing her Post graduation, X joined at National Stock Exchange with an attractive salary of Rs. 32000, 20 years before. Due to her feminine gesture and other matters parents called her back and tied knot with a woman at the age of 23 years. She is father of an 18 year boy now. X revealed her first queer sex experience with a man having the mind of a woman during her government service days at Thiruvananthapuram. Difficult to survive in the society and teasing from co-workers, she fled to Gulf. She continued her marital life without any sexual relationship with her wife. X pointed that her wife slowly understood her inability in having sexual relationship with her. Some incidents persuaded X to come back to Kerala and meanwhile she lost her family support also. After analysing herself as a woman, she engaged in Queerthm activities in Kerala and shifted to Kozhikode. During one programme, agitated people attacked them and on their complaint X and her colleagues were arrested and jailed for 21 days in Kerala. These incidents ruined her mentally and physically. The distant family members were also hurtled and everybody in her family kept a distance with her. None of them were ready to provide her a shelter. Due to the case, she lost her job.

She was totally left alone at this juncture and struggled for her food and accommodation. Her life at the bus stations tend her to engage in sex work for her livelihood. She spent most of the time in various places of Malappuram and Thrissur and earned some amount for her livelihood. At Thrissur she found a Muslim partner and started to live with him. He was also married and had children. In his trust and financial help from her mother X went to Coimbatore and underwent surgery. She proudly said the support she received from her mother. Amma advised me to come home wearing sari and by public transport to educate the people in the area. She warned me if I purposefully don't do that, the relatives won't allow me to even attend her funeral. Meanwhile, X officially got divorce from her ex-wife. She wants to marry her partner officially, but the scholars in his

Mosque hesitated to conduct the ceremony. Now as a normal Muslim woman she wears hijab and lives a religious life with her partner.

X described her entry into KMRL as a certification of her current gender status and said that it provided her confidence to face the society where she lives. Atmosphere in KMRL at first was disappointing. When realized their status of contractual labourers at KMRL the entire community got frustrated. There was no platform for discussion with either KMRL or Kudumbashree, which is supposed to hear us. Such a situation damaged the confidence level of all the transgender employees, as I was assured to be directly employed at KMRL. The logo and fame of Kochi Metro was the real attraction for me. During that time, I was undergoing hormone therapy as a prerequisite of my surgery. The hormonal imbalance coupled with the harassment at KMRL really spoiled my days.

I was earning more than three times salary before joining KMRL, as a General Manager in a better performing hotel. Main attraction was to work with similar minded people and help the new initiative. However, such a benefit was not given by the authority. The reality of equal consideration and benefits of Kudumbashree workers was accepted nowadays. However, there are huge disparities among permanent staff of KMRL and contractual labourers including transgender workers not only on terms of salary, but also the attitude and consideration of the firm. Many of us continue in the firm due to the necessity of a job. The work division in the KMRL was also affected by the gender status. Transgender employees were given additional duties without any payment. They never considered the hormonal imbalance and psychological ill-health of transgender employees.

*Due to the less salary, many of us still engage in sex work for additional earning to meet our household expenses. As my partner is not working, I also engage in sex work as per need. **I can conclude that KMRL is a failure in terms of actions taken to get away the transgender persons from sex work. It should have taken more community responsibility in this case.***

*X welcomed the social status she received as an employee of KMRL. My family started to accept me. My brother talked to me and now they are ready to accept me as such. Interaction with public on daily basis was more productive as it gave me great confidence and it altered the prejudiced mindset of the urban dwellers also. **KMRL was a success in terms of establishing the fact that transgender is a reality in Kerala.***

Case study: 2 Name: XA

XA, now aged 52 years was born as male in an orthodox Christian family in Pathanamthitta district. She revealed her identity after her studies and engaged in tailoring as a livelihood. 'I am working here since its initiation. It provides me confidence to live with my sexual identity'. In her younger ages, she went to Saudi Arabia and worked there for several years. The money she earned was utilized for marrying her sisters and constructing a house.

The bitter experience in my life was on the day of death of my mother. I revealed my identity at that time and used to wear sari for my satisfaction. My siblings locked me in a room when the dead body of my mother was kept for final rituals. The Priest and nuns of our church had asked them to keep me away on that day. I was weeping the entire day inside the room and was not able to see my mother at least once. After the incident, I left my home. I reached Ernakulam and started my life as a tailor. I was able to earn a good amount per month through my profession.

However, as a transgender person society was not ready to accept me. None of my family members talked to me and wanted to see me. Then, the offer to join KMRL came to me through one of my friends in our community organization. I was waiting for such an engagement. Though the salary and other benefits are not attractive for a transgender, the dignity and acceptance gaining through the employment is highly valued. The approach of the firm was not friendly in the beginning but now it has normalized.

However, due to unattractive wage and other benefits, a major share of transgender persons left the firm. Media and public treated it in a different way. They established that the transgender people are not interested in such mainstream employment and they are fond of sex work only. The house owners sought double rent from a transgender person. The expenses like hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery, and commutation etc has to be met from this salary. KMRL has never considered such demands. I am continuing here to prove that not all transgender are engaged in sex work for their earning. Success of this experiment is essential for our community to come out. I am earning sufficient amount from tailoring. So the additional amount from KMRL is sufficient for me. I have completed the construction of my new house.

My family members approached me after joining KMRL and asked me to come and stay in the family. I never want to go back. I am satisfied by the employment in KMRL. I feel no difference in the atmosphere of KMRL. They treat all the contractual labourers in a same manner.

Case Study 3: Name: XB

XB, consider herself as a successful transgender in her life. Hailing from Ernakulam itself, she has ancestral house in the city. The identity crisis was noticed in her from the childhood itself and the parents were supportive and at the same time worried about the society. She was blessed with soft voice from the initiation itself. As she studied in a convent school, strict limitations were imposed which restricted the exposure of sexual content to her. During her adolescent period, she has been exposed to teasing and bullying from some males in her area. She was almost in a protective relationship with an elder male for more than 6 years. She completed her post graduation in Biochemistry. After completing Medical Transcription course she joined a call centre in the city. Thereafter she worked in a Laboratory where she was gaining a monthly salary of Rs. 12000. She never revealed her identity in these previous work places. Though she is sufficiently qualified, she wanted to be engaged in Ernakulam itself to manage her family also.

The positive thing XB pointed in KMRL was the company of other transgender persons and social acceptance and provision for living in their own identity. She expressed pure satisfaction on the working atmosphere of the firm. Though differences exist among the permanent employees and contractual staff, KMRL treats all the contractual staff in the same manner. Support of supervising staff are overwhelming, they have helped us in different stages to learn our work. The friendly approach is visible in all sectors of employees in the firm towards transgender. However, she expressed her dissatisfaction in the absence of career advancement for the transgender employees. As an enthusiastic person, she wanted to be engaged technical side of KMRL, but they have denied such demands by pointing that only departments like Ticketing and Housekeeping are outsourced to Kudumbashree. XB demanded options to include transgender persons in other sectors also irrespective of their identity status. **The absence of a platform to discuss the work related issues along with trade union is also worrying here. Now a committee has been formed to interact with KMRL, ironically no transgender has been included in it.**

The demands like accommodation assistance and benefits like weekly off, cab service at night etc were repeatedly denied by KMRL and were asked to talk to Kudumbashree only. The employees were allowed to discuss such issues to their supervising staff belongs to Kudumbashree. She pointed that the attitude of KMRL is the principal ignition for a transgender person to re-enter into sex work. None of them were engaged in sex work by their own will. Transgender person, if not supported by her family is the principal and sole breadwinner of her family. Authorities have to understand this fact. I tried to get them away from sex work by describing its vulnerability, unhygienic situation etc, but without providing financial assistance how can we further advise them? Most of the customers are truck drivers from other states and are never willing to use condoms. Some of them engage in sex work for earning extra money to meet the cost of sex reassignment surgery. **Why can't government adopt any alternative for re-imburement of the cost of surgery?** For fulfilling the desire to become a woman she has started hormone therapy. XB wanted to engage in work to become self sufficient and to prove herself as a strong woman. Though her family grants her full support, she herself gets away from family functions like marriage and funerals. That day **I will engage with**

Radio Mango, as the RJs there gave inspiration to solve each and every problem in day today life.

2.2.5 Former Employees

The former employees in the KMRL pointed towards betrayal from KMRL as the main reason for their withdrawal. Three former employees were interviewed to assess the reasons behind the large level dropout of transgender employees from there. Most of them quit the firm just after their joining.

1. Just a media game:

The former employees collectively stated that the transgender were brought to KMRL only to attract media attention. The news of appointing transgender gave unprecedented media coverage to KMRL. Now they say that transgender are not direct staff of KMRL, and only Kudumbashree is responsible to them. *‘If we were not part of KMRL, then why did not they deny it during the initial period?’* asked a former employee in anger. *‘None of us left the job because of our own interest. Our situation was demanding that. I came to metro with a lot of hope. We know that even the European magazine “The Guardian” has reported our appointment in the KMRL. But reality is different; I was the Vice President of the association called “Dwaya”. I approached some people to make a flux regarding our selection in metro. Those people asked me to pay thirty five thousand. We did not get any support from metro even though we were making the flux on behalf of them. When the water metro was launching, the funding agency came to visit the area. Our authorities were showing us and they asked us to communicate with them. They were using us. But finally, our people are still in the same stage. We are not even able to attain our basic needs. **‘They are really selling us for their livelihood’.***

2. Shelter :

‘KMRL people portrayed the withdrawal in a different way. As per them, we were not interested to stay in the congregation. The fact is different. Apart from the issues of common rooms (dormitory) and unavailability of privacy we were used to wait hours to

enter the Bhavan after our shift, as the timing to enter the centre closes by 8.30 PM. The authorities in the Bhavan questioned us like we are prostitutes’, added the former employees. The government was ready to provide financial assistance to sort out the issue of accommodation. They planned to provide it through Kudumbashree, but not yet initiated. Government properties are still vacant in the area. A collective approach is missing here and it ultimately affected the transgender.

3. Inappropriate Salary:

KMRL hold the stand that transgender people were treated equally with the other Kudumbashree members. The salary offered to them were different from what they received at the end of the day. *‘We are not engines to work 24 X 7 basis’,* said a former employee. She continued that, *‘our day starts in the early morning. Need to reach metro before 5.30 AM. After our shift, we have to make our own food and then changing the uniform we go to streets to get customers for sex work. It ends only in the midnight’.* Their expectation was a better and uplifted life. Through the employment in KMRL, they have received social acceptance and dignity. But for meeting their financial needs, they were again sent off to streets. Some of them pointed that they were earning more from their previous job than KMRL.

2.2.5.1 Case Studies: Name F1

F1 was born and brought up in a single mother family in Thrissur. She lived with her mother’s ancestral house where all were females. From the childhood itself she was attracted to males and even approached them. She realized her sexual desire at the age of 13, when she had sexual relationship with one of her classmates, where she acted bottom. Poverty, diseases and ignorance from the community persuaded her to stop her studies with SSLC. While travelling to other states as a transgender she understood the status of her community in other states. ‘I was pulled into a police case in connection with begging in train. The police officers were aware that I was not in the plot at that time. But they asked me to sign a paper as a witness and along with 10 others I signed in it. I became the first culprit in that case. This was a conspiracy by the

district police. When this became news in the media, to get rid of this black image, the Police officer planned our entry into KMRL. It was very clear that neither KMRL nor Kudumbashree thought to initiate such a community responsibility programme. Along with the unexpected media coverage, KMRL own this as their social commitment, added F1.

*'The training at Rajagiri was meaningful but everything collapsed when we joined KMRL for work. All were disappointed by the fact that we were recruited under Kudumbashree and not by KMRL. Since then, KMRL never owned us. I have survived Syphilis, Gonorrhoea and prolonged depression in my life. I expected a neat salary to run my family. **But they pulled me back to sex work.** As my partner is not working, I have to work hard for my family and to meet my treatment cost. After a short period of time I resigned from there because it gave me nothing but a miserable work-life there. I was appointed in Cleaning section without considering my qualification'.*

Now, undergoing treatment for Cancer and Kidney problems, she is adamant that the society will never treat a transgender as human beings and none of the initiatives by the Government really wants to uplift their life. All these are media gimmicks, she concluded. KMRL has viewed us as aliens and never tried to hear our voice. They knew nothing about a transgender person. We need nothing but treated to be a human being.

Case Study 2: Name F2

She was the second child to her parents. Being a member of an economically sound family, she learned music and expressed her affection to other art forms from her childhood itself. The circumstances made her strong to reveal her identity to her family during adolescence. However, her family accepted it and protected her. F2, considered her entry into KMRL as a blessing to meet other transgender people and the opportunity to earn for her own. Meanwhile, she got the opportunity to act in some movies and that gave her fame also. The modelling career gave her great confidence to live in the society.

In KMRL, she was appointed in Housekeeping irrespective of her qualification. 'My English is good, but they never accepted it. Even I acted in English movies'. The second class consideration at KMRL worried her and struggled to continue there. After a certain level, she decided to stop. 'It's not a respectful job. They never understand us' she said.

'The co-workers and senior level officials of KMRL have the mindset that all transgender are sex workers. This taboo exists among all categories of staff. They may earn more from sex work even if they are expelled from the firm. Like all women are not sex workers, we are also. I hate sex work and never like to go for such a thing. As a model allied with international brands, I was able to manage work and my passion. I started my career at the age of 15, working as front officer in Fort Kochi'. After marriage she decided to quit KMRL and underwent surgery also. 'I want to again engage in work, but not in KMRL. I want a better environment. It was due to my education and protection from my family, I don't think other transgender can survive like me without family support', she stopped.

Case Study 3: Name F3

*F3 is a 29 year old girl now stays alone in a rented house at Kochi. She was working in a hotel in the city before joining KMRL. 'I was happy there, as my gender identity was accepted by them. Moreover I never experienced any harassment there. That time police used to raid the hotel occasionally and this made the owners disappointed. Due to mental distress I decided to quit that job. One of my friends suggested me to KMRL and was happy to work in a central government agency. But the truth was a bitter one. Till the completion of training, everything was fine. Neither the Officials, nor the co-workers were trained to behave with Transgender. **Instead of giving us one month long training, the authorities should have trained the other staff at least for a day.** I had never seen a normal face there. All were transphobic. No toilet, no accommodation, no commutation assistance and no attractive salary. Then why should we suffer there? I never enjoyed the days there. The outside world was far better than KMRL.*

When I tried to talk to authorities, they were not ready to even hear us. Awareness should be given to other staff to understand transgender. In the cafeteria, I felt isolated, when other workers were sharing food and having tea and snacks together.

I was expelled from my home along with my identity revelation at the age of 13. From then, I struggled a lot to satisfy my hunger and other needs. I never like to do sex work. But my situation compelled me to engage in it for several times. Society never gives us any other jobs. For them, a transgender is all for sex.

Now, I am getting more salary from my job in hotel than KMRL. They are accepting me also. I send money to my family for the education of my younger brother.

2.3 Conclusion

The results of the effort taken by KMRL along with Kudumbashree and other related organizations to up bring the transgender community need to be appreciated. It has enormous impact in uplifting the transgender community to the mainstream work sector in Kerala. It has boosted other organizations to engage transgender people in their firms. Apart from employment, this action has benefitted the community level acceptance, destroying the stigma prevailing in the society, and ensured availability of accommodation facilities for the marginalized community. The family and social acceptance have boosted the confidence of transgender community to become self-dependent.

At the same time, there are certain points to be noted for the slow progress of the project. The large level withdrawal of transgender has been looked through various perspectives and points the absence of collective activities from the side of Government, KMRL and Kudumbashree to fulfill the needs of transgender workers in the firm. The expectation offered to them during the initiation was huge and it ended up without fulfilling any of them, except societal acceptance to a certain level. The message envisaged for the community through the actions of KMRL was not satisfactory. The utilization of CSR fund for the benefit of transgender community is necessary. Special schemes may be initiated by Government to provide better accommodation facility, medical benefits and career development for the employees in the community. This will not only benefit the current employees, but also boost the confidence of a transgender person to face the society.

Chapter 3

Role of Kudumbashree in strengthening Employability of Transgender

Kudumbashree, poverty eradication mission of the Government of Kerala works with 45 lakhs women who are organized into 2.9 lakh Neighborhood Groups. Kudumbashree is a holistic, participatory, women oriented innovative overarching poverty reduction approach. It envisages prosperity of the economically backward families in the state with multiple programmes that will provide them information, create awareness, build up their capability and capacity, enhance their confidence and show them opportunity for better social security and empower them physically, socially and economically and politically (<https://kudumbashree.org/>). It has been documented internationally and several countries have adopted the methodology for the empowerment of the marginalized communities. Kudumbashree has altered lives of economically backward women in the state, changed their perception, built their confidence, boosted their morale, rediscovered their dignity and honor, and empowered them economically, socially and politically. The Community Based Organization (CBO) of poor set up by the Mission under the leadership of Local Self Governments plays vital role in eradication of absolute poverty. The Community Based Organization, which encompasses all sections of poor, is organized in to a three-tier structure ie, NHG, ADS and CDS. After the historical verdict of transgender right in 2014 and State transgender policy in 2015, Kudumbashree has initiated several activities to strengthen the marginalized community.

Disha Campaign

The Disha campaign initiated in 2017 aimed to reduce marginalization of disadvantaged groups and strengthen initiatives for social inclusion. The objective of the campaign has been to form special NHGs of groups like the elderly, migrants, members of the transgender community, persons with disabilities, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities as well as families belonging to coastal hamlets. Around 9,068 new NHGs were formed as part of this initiative.

Through the special NHGs, formed for vulnerable sections like senior citizens (elderly), differently-abled and Transgender as members, Kudumbashree developed strategies for their sustainable livelihood, rehabilitation and integration into society and their participation in mainstream developmental process

However, the core activity of Kudumbashree remained in its preliminary aim to strengthen women. Special gender programs and State Gender Center etc. were formed and provided vigorous support to solve gender related issues in the state. ‘Snehitha’, a 24X7 gender help desk and Gender Sensitization program etc. also incorporated in this activity.

As a part of Kudumbashree Gender self-learning programme, 336 community counselors were appointed in 14 districts of the state. These counselors work in collaboration with gender resource centres of Kudumbashree and ‘Snehitha’ gender help desk all over the state. It provides premarital counseling, counseling services to the parents of BUDS/BRC children, old age people and adolescent students. Apart from these areas it concentrates to, young couples, children, women who are survivors of violence in family and workplace, people with psychiatric problems, Drug abuse etc. However, the priority area never comprises the most marginalized sector of the society – transgender.

Gender Sensitization Programme, another initiative by Kudumbashree helps people in examining their personal attitudes and beliefs and questioning the realities of both sexes. It tried to create awareness among the working professionals about the importance of gender sensitivity in organization. These programmes are aimed primarily to sensitize both boys and girls and here also transgender or other categories are not covered.

3.1 Objective

Documentation of activities of Kudumbashree mission in strengthening the transgender community particularly in the field of self-employment is the main objective of the present chapter. The specific objectives are given below;

1. To assess the attitude of Kudumbashree officials (State level and unit level) towards transgender members in NHGs
2. To assess the help rendered by Kudumbashree in developing confidence among transgender members of NHGs
3. To assess the societal acceptance, self-dependence and financial progress of transgender members through Kudumbashree

3.2 Data and Methods

The state level Manager of NHGs, district Kudumbashree coordinator, CDS of the selected unit and members of the transgender NHGs- especially the President or secretary were interviewed to assess the situation. All the interviews were done after taking consent. The units were selected in order to get inputs from both better performing as well as not performing units.

3.3 Results

Kudumbashree has succeeded in organizing transgender community in the form of 'Ayalkoottam', the most successful form of SHGs. It has taken up different activities including shops, super markets and restaurants. A total of 40 NHGs with 550 members were formed exclusively for transgender members in Kerala. One peculiarity of the transgender NHGs is its urban characteristics. Panchayat wise NHGs are not possible due to lesser number of transgender people in Panchayat. As most of the transgender are concentrated in urban area, NHGs are developed in the urban settings in Kerala. The district wise number of transgender NHGs and services rendered to it are given in the following Table.

Table 3.1: District wise details of transgender NHGs

District	No. of NHGs	Services rendered
Thiruvananthapuram	7	
Kollam	3	Corpus fund : 10000 each for 2 groups
Pathanamthitta	2	
Alappuzha	3	Micro Enterprises: 50,000
Kottayam	3	Corpus Fund: 10,000
Idukki	1	Prathyasha – 4,50,000
Ernakulam	3	No assistance
Thrissur	2	CMHLS: 1,00,000
Palakkad	1	Linkage loan and Grant from Social Justice department CMHLS : 45000
Malappuram	4	Revolving fund : 15,000
Kozhikode	3	Linkage loan: 3,00,000 CMHLS: 6,65,000 Prathyasha: 2,00,000
Wayanad	3	RF: 10,000
Kannur	3	ME: 1,00,000
Kasaragod	2	RF: 10,000
Total	40	

Linkage Loans are sanctioned to the Neighbourhood groups from the affiliated banks. The program has the advantage of lesser interest rate (only 4%). The rest of the interest will be borne by the Government. CMHLS is an interest free loan scheme announced by the Chief Minister of Kerala in the wake of pandemic in March 2020. The scheme is implemented on the lines of ‘Resurgent Kerala’ loan scheme introduced after the floods. ‘Pratyasha’ is a financial assistance programme provided by Kudumbashree for the highly vulnerable groups. This one time grant needs no repayment. All these assistance are provided based on the performance of the NHGs. Kudumbashree provide assistance to initiate micro enterprises for the transgender community. It

also channelizes financial assistance from Government agencies like Social Security Mission for the betterment of transgender community.

Though there are nearly 40 NHGs formed by the transgender members in the state, some of them do not perform to a certain level. At the same time, several of them are better performing also. 'Manaswini' in Kottayam is the first neighborhood group registered in Kerala exclusively for transgender. 15 transgender are actively engaged in this NHG. 'Udayam' another neighbourhood started in Kunnukuzhi ward of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation received massive assistance from the Corporation and ward councilor. Members of 'Nanma' neighbourhood group, Kannur launched a micro enterprise unit – 'Nicy Chips', in which only transgender are working. 'Punarjani Juice Corner', an initiative in Kozhikode has a monthly turnover of Rs.80000/-, which is a successful initiative. Lakshys Fruits and Juice Corner, an initiation at Kakkanad run an ornament manufacturing unit also. Livelihood activity outlet, Wayanad is selling vegetables. Two units of Varnangi, an ornament and costume lending shop functioning in Pandalam and Koduman of Pathanamthitta, Vibha in Malapuram and Mudra Dance school in Iduki, Dhvani', 'Friends' and 'Bharathakala' bale troupes in Alappuzha are also initiatives by the transgender NHGs organized by Kudumbashree. With the help of Social Justice Department, Government of Kerala, Kudumbashree established its first ever transgender canteen in the state at Palakkad - Oruma. Mini – a supermarket at Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad in association with the Brahmagiri Development Society (BDS) is another venture of Kudumbashree transgender NHGs. Through all these neighbourhood organizations which turned to an entrepreneurship Kudumbashree has visualized the fact that transgender are to be placed in the mainstream job folios without any discrimination.

Some of them are better performing like catering unit in Palakkad. Cafe Kudumbashree was a collective programme by the transgender NHGs, which were flourished before Covid-19, as quoted by the State Manager of Kudumbashree for NHGs. Kudumbashree has given special preference to this particular group to ensure livelihood for its members. It used to provide catering services and serving food to mass level programs, public functions organized by government and NGOs etc. The members were able to save sufficient money from this and moreover, it gave them a reputed place among the customers, pointed the State Manager. *'Ayalkoottam' or NHGs are generally based in some particular area, but NHGs of transgender*

are urban centered as many of them are concentrated in the urban areas for their livelihood. When organized and trained for particular job, they were happy and supportive. Rather than transgender persons, training and awareness are required for the higher level employers and members of LSG to interact with transgender. I believe, it as a vital point in mainstreaming transgender. The society needs orientation to interact with transgender', he said. **Gender sensitization is required among the higher level government officials.** Teasing, sexy-jokes and bullying etc. from the general population always hurt them and pull them back from mainstream activities. Development Programs and ideas for self-employment should be emerged from the transgender community itself. **Imposing tailored models to them won't fit the transgender community just like any other marginalized community.** Pandemic has negatively affected the NHGs and transgender people particularly. Different from area based Ayalkoottam, NHGs of transgender were not able to meet regularly. This has restricted their service delivery and hence affected livelihood also.

Forming of NHGs and providing those small loans are merely an initiation only. Making them economically active and beneficial for livelihood of the marginalized community is to be the output of missions like Kudumbashree. Case studies of one unit each from Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur and Palakkad are portrayed here.

Case study: Unit 1: Samathwam Kudumbashree Unit

The CDS of the unit was primarily interviewed to ascertain the administrative and coordinating difficulties of a Kudumbashree Ayalkoottam (NHGs). Since 2018, this unit is functioning in the Vanchiyoor ward of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. But Samathwam Kudumbashree unit is a newly constituted one as the old one functioning here has been shifted to another ward. Different from other NHGs, these are not area centric but people centric. The new unit was constituted in the beginning of 2020.

As it is the aim of Kudumbashree to start NHGs for transgender and other marginalized communities, we searched for transgender members in the area. As expected, we found several transgender persons in this ward. However, we just gave them an idea of NHG. They contacted other members of their community and with the help of ward councilor we formed the unit. All the members were really cooperative. They were working in harmony. We had many initiatives

led by our members; most of our members had their own self-employment ideas. One of our members is a talented cook who makes snacks items; we have a member who is having a tailor shop. So, for all these members of our unit we were providing enough loans for them to upgrade their employment status. We organized a monthly market for them to sell their products but unfortunately this unit could not turn up on that day. As the unit members are staying collectively in two houses, meeting them and coordinating them is not a big task. They meet once in two weeks and send us their minutes and other formalities, informed the CDS.

I never felt it difficult to interact with them. They are just like members of other women units. Moreover, they are talented and are with great ideas. Formation of the unit has really excited them and they want to be accepted by the community from where they were expelled once due to their gender status. Even though lock down is a barrier, they use to contact us for clarifying their doubts regarding their work.

Lockdown has really affected their life. They had planned a lot for uplifting themselves. Loan was sanctioned for opening a tailoring shop for one of the members, but the lock down has made everything stagnant. Transgender members have the permission to sell their product in the monthly market, but due to this lock down, everything are lethargic. Though some are engaged in sex work, most of the members are engaged in different sectors of employment. Seven of them have regular income from their job. But lockdown has ruined them. We provided a kit for them with ten items from our unit.

While interacting with them one will be surprised. They behave neatly and give respect to others. It is the society which considers them something special and second class citizen. They have an urge for a prosperous life. Empowering them is one of the main goals of our unit, concluded the CDS.

President of Samathwam Kudumbashree Unit

The current president of the Samathwam Kudumbashree unit opened up the details of their activities in the past year. *Already one Kudumbashree unit was functioning here, but we felt the need of a genuine Kudumbashree unit for transgender. Because of this intention we met the CDS of Vanchiyoor and took further steps for constituting the unit. This was not just a usual unit, we*

aims to attain our needs through this. **We created a Whatsapp group for our unit and we always keep up to date.** The working nature of other Kudumbashree units in other districts inspired us to have one for us. We selected twelve genuine workers from our community. Some of them were involved in other groups and some are fresh. Through this group we actually formulated a companionship. This companionship helped each other during this pandemic period for distributing the materials issued by the municipality. And this joint venture also imparts the aim of saving the money for our future. As meeting once in two weeks was difficult, we shifted to a single house. Being transgender people, staying together give better security feeling for us. The meeting schedule, criteria, agenda, preparation of minutes etc. are as usual as other Kudumbashree units. We have elderly transgender persons also as our members. Their experience and patience help us a lot to run our meetings smoothly.

Through this venture, we really intend to be self-sufficient. As everybody knows, transgender people are never supported by the outer community, moreover sometimes they misuse us also. We expect support from Government through Kudumbashree. This will be a great help for all of us. We hope to get financial assistance, from Kudumbashree after six months. So this financial assistance should not be a mere financial help, but this should be an opportunity to win all our needs. That's why we are always keen on our members attending our meetings. We will let the world know about our success, she explained her vision.

Kudumbashree authorities contact us and inform the availability of various schemes to begin any self-employment ventures. But currently, our unit is not meeting the criteria of receiving any financial aid from them. After six months we will be able to make good results through this initiative.

It was Covid-19, which stopped all our activities. We didn't start anything yet. We were given an opportunity to sell our products in the market of Kudumbashree. In the monthly market we were planning to sell biryani and local chicken eggs. But unfortunately due to the pandemic restrictions and guidelines we could not accomplish the market. If we get an opportunity to show our capacity, obviously we can achieve better results, she said confidently.

As I am presently working in a private firm after completing my surgery, I can support some other members also. Many of us lost our daily earnings during the time of lockdown. It was

*actually tough days. During those days I used to work in a supermarket. From that small amount of income, somehow I adjusted. **We use to receive kits from Kudumbashree and also from the government.** All these helped me to survive the lockdown.*

The healthy relationship with Kudumbashree authorities boosts our confidence. Overall, I feel proud when I say that I am the President of the Samathwam Kudumbashree unit. That acceptance actually gives happiness, because I am representing a vulnerable community, so I really feel it as a greater achievement, she stopped.

Case Study: 2; Nicy Chips, (Nanma Kudumbashree unit) Kannur

*Nicy Chips is an initiative by Nanma Kudumbashree unit. Nanma came into force on 1st November 2017. Along with our initiation, District Mission Office asked us to start any ventures for the betterment of our community. They offered one lakh rupees as a startup fund for this venture. Almost all of our members have experience in bakery and hotel field. So finally, we decided to form a chips producing unit. We received **Mudra loan of amount three lakhs rupees.** We are receiving immense support from them, said the President of the unit.*

*As it was one of the initial units in Kerala, they struggled to get enough transgender members to form the unit. There were no model units for us to follow. We just went through the instructions of our ADS and CDS. We found our other members through DIC a dropping center functioning here. We have eight members currently working in Nicy Chips. Another 15 people also help in our work. **We are happy that our venture is livelihood for almost 22 people in Kerala.***

*It was not easy to coordinate the members of the unit in the beginning. There were differences in attitude, time spending, and income distribution etc. Shelter was an issue for someone and somebody was interested to engage in sex work as it gave them more income. As new comers in this field, we had a fear of failure, but we created a success story, thanks to God. **In the first place, where we started our unit, local people started complaining about over use of water, electricity;** even going out for selling snacks were also a big issue. Finally we shifted to another place.*

*We were actually struggling to find two things in our life - shelter and self-employment. Many of us do not have proper shelter. Working with someone else always creates issues. Hence initialization of our Chips unit solved two major problems simultaneously. Kudumbashree have a weekly savings program. We will be collecting 100 rupees from everyone as our savings. Another step was to open bank account for all the members. That was a very happy moment. This actually helped us to start savings for our future. I can realize the changes happened in my life after joining in Kudumbashree. We started to enjoy social acceptance. Society also supported us. **If I could not make any change obviously I will be continuing sex work for my livelihood.** Now I lead a better life. After being a part of the Kudumbashree we are actually equipped with self-employment. Even if I do not continue here, I can sell my products. I learned business. We have participated in All India Trade Fairs conducted in various part of the country like Rajasthan, Pune, Delhi and Goa. BBC also reported the initiatives of our Kudumbashree unit. So we are proud, she said.*

*Due to lock down and non-accessibility to banks, we are not in a position to open another unit. However, **we have confidence in starting branches of our unit somewhere else also.***

*Apart from Chips production, we have many other initiatives under this Nanma Kudumbashree unit. There is a loan scheme called “Mutathe Mulla”. **In Kerala only our transgender Kudumbashree unit is receiving this Mutathe mulla loan.** Bank will be providing money for interest. Bank interest rate is 9%; we will be charging 12% from our members. We save the 3 % for our unit. This is actually a savings scheme. This money will be providing for the small scale business units and other small traders for their financial emergencies.*

Kudumbashree gave us sufficient training in the field. Apart from that, participation in several programmes boosted our confidence level and we enjoyed the social acceptance. Kudumbashree also helped us in marketing our product.

We received all the benefits declared by Kudumbashree during lock down. We received six thousand rupees as financial assistance. The revolving fund is also granted but due to the lack of funds in CDS we did not receive it.

*As a Kudumbashree member we participate in other activities organized by Government through the mission. **I used to coordinate with the Suraksha project of health department.** During lock*

down, when our business slowed down, I used to go for distributing newspaper as a newspaper agent. We received kits. We got all the assistance provided by the Social Justice Department during the pandemic.

They consider the main advantage of initiating the unit is social acceptance. People became ready to rent houses to transgender people. This is a great achievement.

Case study : 3 Oruma – TG Canteen, Palakkad

The successful story of Oruma started in 2018 with 10 transgender members. With the efforts of Kudumbashree and Social Security Mission, Government of Kerala on 13th December 2019 they started a canteen in the Civil station of Palakkad. **They received a grant of four lakh rupees from Social Security Mission.** As all the members in the NHG were interested in cooking it was easy for them to run the unit. The president of the unit proudly recollected the initial activities of the unit.

Civil station authorities provided a room for us in the building which was kept unutilized for a long period of time. We spent nearly 3.5 lakhs for beautification of the room and purchase of equipment for running the canteen. In the initial days, less than 50 people came to the unit. But within a short period of time, officers and those come to the court at the Civil station building became attracted to our canteen. Surprisingly, from the third day itself we provided food for more than 150 persons. During Lock down, we reduced the quantity and number person engaged in daily work has been reduced to 3-4 from 10. Accounts were settled in the evening and all the persons were given wages in the evening. However, a share of the earning was kept as savings which is used mainly for payment like electricity and water. The timing of the unit is from 8 in the morning to 4 in the evening.

*She said that they have maintained a quality - not to go for sex work after joining the canteen. This was a decision taken unanimously by the members without any external compulsion. The team members were aware of the attitude of customers and to run the business and strict in keeping the good image of the unit. Only 4 of the 10 members are staying in their own home, and a building has been taken in rent for the accommodation of other members. **This is also used as shelter for those undergoing surgery or hormone therapy.***

Except 3 persons, all have completed more than 10 years of schooling. Age of the members ranged between 22 and 55 years. The members keep all the registers updated related to NHG.

Managing the members is very difficult but it is similar in other units also. During lock down period, they were engaged in community kitchen activity and have earned more than Rs. 1000/- per day. However, Kudumbashree has not given any additional help including kits. But we are happy that we were assigned a big task to prepare food for the community where we are living.

They are interested to open branches of their units in other areas. But pointed the difficulty to get apt persons like the one they have. Along with the duties of TG canteen, the president is also running a tailoring unit in her house itself. Two women workers are also engaged in the unit. She is happy that she became an entrepreneur with self-motivation. The experiences in Mumbai helped her to mould her capacity. *As my brother was working in Mumbai, I joined as a typist in Readers Digest in Bandra. There, for the first time, I had seen Hijra people in the trains. I felt satisfaction that I have identified my inner truth. I talked to them and they invited and introduced me to their Amma (Hijra Guru). She asked me to stay there, but I was not able. We used to go for begging in trains, which gave us more than Rs. 2000/- per day. From the collected amount, Rs. 300/- is given to Amma. They never insisted me for sex work, but taught me how to attract and behave with customers. Customers approached our Guru for me as I was new and fresh at that time. When my elder brother came to know the matter he sent me back to Palakkad.*

After reaching Kerala, she started tailoring and through that married two of her sisters. Family members and the society are aware of her sexual orientation and never compelled her to marry a girl. *The initiation has given me better social status and now I am happily leading this unit with the help of my fellow members. If we earn without the help of others, they will respect us and even accept us irrespective of our sexual orientation,* she said.

She revealed that in her adolescent ages, they were not in a position to challenge the abuses they have experienced. Most of them were from intimate relatives or school teachers. However, the new generation transgender are aware of such abuses.

The president happily said that she along with some other members learned to drive two wheelers and four wheelers with the help of Social Security Mission. Driving classes were given free of cost to them. This has given them more courage to self- dependence.

3.3 Conclusion

Kudumbashree has provided a platform for the transgender community to cherish their own ideas. The interest of the members of the NHGs is the backbone in successfully running every unit. Enrolling sufficient transgender persons is a big task, and it was sorted out by the initiation of the members itself. Apart from the help of Kudumbashree CDS, local level members and ward members were also involved in this process. There is an apparent excitement from the transgender to be accepted by the community from where they were expelled once due to their gender status and it accelerates them to overcome the hurdles to form the unit. From the discussion with the CDS of one unit, it is clear that Kudumbashree has helped the members of NHGs to survive during lockdown. Some aspirational units have utilized the opportunity of lockdown to sell their products. The act of TG canteen at Palakkad is a typical example for this.

Connectivity through social media especially Whatsapp and Facebook has a crucial role in sharing ideas among the transgender units. The transgender members have a great expectation on these NHGs. They consider the financial assistance from Government through Kudumbashree as an opportunity to win all their needs. Some units, which haven't received any fund, keep their track positive for better initiation in future.

The pandemic has affected several members of the transgender NHGs. Though some of them received kit from respective CDS, many of them had gone through a miserable condition. There was nobody to take care of them or provide any financial assistance. They sought help from other transgender members only. Kudumbashree would have been acted better during this time to help them.

Instead of supporting the initiations of transgender for their livelihood, the local community was suspicious over them. It made several hurdles for them and even some of them were forced to change the place of their unit. Through these self-employment units, they want to ensure two prime things in their life – shelter and livelihood with acceptability. The success of micro enterprises by the transgender NHGs gave acceptability in their area and it ensures a shelter for them without any hesitance from the local people.

The umbrella of Kudumbashree has made them visible for other government or non-governmental agencies and the collective effort offered other loans which helped the NHGs

to flourish as best enterprises. The role of Social Security Mission is appreciable in the makeover of several NHGs. The base of TG canteen at Palakkad is the one time grant from the department of Social Security Mission itself. The Nicy Chips unit was able to receive Mudra loan worth 3 lakhs is an example of the same. Kudumbashree has not only provided financial assistance to NHGs but also empowered them to go beyond and reach other agencies. There are several other agencies under Government of Kerala like Kerala Financial Corporation, which assist transgender people. Collaboration with such agencies will ease the life of transgender to attain a livelihood with dignity.

Chapter 4

Jyothis Bhavan - on hand solution for accommodation of transgender

When I was born, my family celebrated my birth greatly, as they were waiting for a boy after three girls. I tried to hide my sexual orientation for several years due to fear of losing my family, and happy atmosphere there. When I revealed, my mother hugged me with love and that shelter rescued me from several vulnerable situation in my life. – Words of a successful transgender model in Kerala.

The protection that family provides to a person especially in their growing ages is highly important in keeping them secure from various forms of abuses. It is more significant in terms of a transgender who lives in more vulnerable conditions. Ryan (2009)¹⁹ pointed the importance of family acceptance as a barrier for risky behaviours, including risk for HIV, substance abuse and other negative behaviours. Many transgender youth feel like they have to hide who they are to avoid being rejected, thrown out of their home, or hurting their parents and other family members. Ryan also points that transgender youth who were rejected by their families because of their identity had much lower self-esteem. They had fewer people they could turn to for help. And they were more isolated than youth who were accepted by their families.

In Kerala, majority of the transgender persons has to come out of their family along with their revelation of sexual orientation. Study done by Saritha in 2018 revealed that a vast majority of

¹⁹ Ryan, Caitlin , 2009. ‘Supportive Families, Healthy Children Helping Families with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Children’, Family Acceptance Project™. San Francisco State University. <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>

the transgender persons stay out of their home due to various reasons. Typically, this coming out happens during their adolescence and it significantly reduces their educational attainment.

Unavailability of accommodation is being discussed in various forums as the basic reason behind the vulnerable condition of the transgender community. Most of the transgender people are expelled from their ancestral home along with their revelation of sexual orientation. It was also identified as the major reasons of withdrawal of large level transgender employees from KMRL (Sibi I K, 2017).

Identifying the importance of shelter, the government of Kerala has initiated several short stay homes for the transgender community. Thanal a short stay home for transmen managed by Queerythm in Thiruvananthapuram, Snehakoodu, managed by Punarjani Cultural Society in Kozhikode for transwomen, Dwani in Kottayam and Mudra in Ernakulam are some of such initiatives from the side of Government. The Department of Social Justice has initiated a project named 'Mazhavillu' which managed the shelter homes with the help of organizations working for the welfare of transgender in the state. However, such initiatives were provided little assistance to the transgender community. The time period of three months to find a job and the lack of facilities in these centres made them unattractive for the transgender people. Though six such homes were opened in Kerala, only three are currently functioning.

In 2021, Government has announced another housing programme for the transgender community- **Sukrutham Housing Scheme** which aims to provide land for the homeless transgender through the Local Self-Government Institutions. This is a first initiative by the government to provide a safer dwelling place for the financially unstable transgender in the community. The scheme will be implemented by the Social Justice Department in association with the Community Based organization. This scheme will be beneficial for the homeless transgender in the state having a Transgender ID card by the social justice department. The Kerala Transgender Housing Scheme 2021, aims to provide night shelter to the transgender people in its first phase. There are plans to develop comprehensive housing scheme, similar to the Kerala state government's LIFE mission, for the transgender across the state. The possibility of including the sexual minority group in the list of LIFE mission beneficiaries will also be examined in this scheme. Government, based on a study conducted by the SJD recently, revealed

that a majority of transgender are still living in the streets due to lack of shelter. Even relatives are not willing to offer them an abode.

Such a situation badly requires assessing the difficulties of organizing and managing shelter homes for transgender community in Kerala.

4.1 Objectives

The chapter aims to document the difficulties and benefits of running shelter homes for transgender community in Kerala through the case study of ‘Jyothis Bhavan’ and also disclose the importance of such initiatives to the general society.

The specific objectives of the documentation are given below;

1. To assess the functioning of Jyothis Bhavan
2. To understand the freedom, acceptance and atmosphere transgender experience in the Bhavan
3. To assess the possibilities of initiating such organizations in other places

4.2 Data and Methods

The study collected information from the Bishop, Mother in-charge and inmates of the Bhavan through interview method. All the inmates were interviewed and three case studies were prepared for the better presentation of the experiences of the transgender inmates.

4.3 Results

‘Jyothis Bhavan’ in Ernakulam, functioning under the Congregation of Mother of Carmel under Kerala Catholic Bishop’s Council, is providing shelter to transgender community. The Bhavan started functioning in Kakkand, Ernakulam in its own campus. When the issue of accommodation of transgender employees rose to a certain level in KMRL, Bhavan was approached for this. They provided accommodation to all the transgender in the dormitory.

The then Bishop Sebastian described the attitude of the Bishop's council towards the marginalized communities. They began an institution called "City Evangelization" in Ernakulam in 2005. This group comprises of priests, nuns and people from other community like Islam. This was formed to provide care for the vulnerable section of the society including people who live in the street, sex workers, transgender, and HIV patients. Every month, the team used to meet and analyzed strategies to attain social justice, ways to reach this people and increase awareness among themselves of this community. The transgender community does not have a proper shelter, which was one of the major concerns raised by them. For medical assistance, transgender people from other districts have to come to Ernakulam and they faced the problem of not having a shelter. The team members contacted the Vimala Province, Ernakulam congregation with the aim of providing shelter to transgender for providing classes for them, for taking them to picnics and also for inculcating the perception of the value and importance of their own body.

Bishop further disclosed the stand of Bishop's council and Sabha that they always stand together with the marginalized community. He quoted the example of 'Moolampilly strike', in which 'Sabha' were in the forefront. *Being a Bishop, I was playing the lead role, Sabha did not have any objections in including transgender community. When we started taking care of the disadvantaged people, the society was actually attracted towards our activities. Simultaneously, society also witnessed the changes happening in its environment. Our artists, our writers, our musicians and cinema started to familiarize the situation of the community. Social media were also played an important role in it. During that time in America also witnessed many changes. Then, slowly people started to accept this as a reality. When they started to share their problems with us we started to mingle with them. This also invited the social attention towards the transgender community. Our step was really small but we could set an example,* said the Bishop.

The experiences the Bishop had during his 17 years long service at Pune helped him to offer assistance to transgender community. Mother Superior of the Bhavan who also acts as Director of the centre talked about the initiation of the shelter.

The Mother Superior was engaged in church related services in Mumbai for 16 years and at that time she came to acquaintance with members of transgender community. *‘There I used to bring these people to my convent, shared my food and I also talked with them and they shared their emotions and issues’*. In Kerala, the visibility of transgender in the public places is rare. At Mumbai, they are engaged in several activities and the Hijra culture covered their shelter and security issues. As a social worker she extended her support to the transgender community in Kerala. *“In the beginning I was not able to find any transgender persons. Vijayaraja Malika (a transgender poet), approached me who was struggling for a shelter in the city. After a discussion with our Head of the Institute, I provided accommodation in our congregant. She stayed here till she attained a permanent income. There after, some others also approached Bhavan for accommodation. Meanwhile metro has been initiated and hopefully, we sent all our inmates for training at Rajagiri. After this, we conducted an inaugural function. Most of them came here without their parent’s knowledge because they cannot express their identity to them. This initiation was really helpful to them because they do not have a proper shelter to stay. As we have our own building, we can accommodate as many as 20 inmates here. Presently, we have only 8 transgender persons,* she said. Bhavan came into force in 22nd December, 2016. Two other sisters were part of the program at that time and they received three more inmates in the beginning itself.

Funding and aid

The Bhavan started with own fund. The higher level authorities of Kerala Catholic Bishop’s Council helped and supported the movement. Later, in 2020-21, Government of Kerala provided financial support to the congregation. Hence, they have changed their policy also. It has become a short stay home for the non-student transgender persons. Now, they can stay in the centre for 3 months and meanwhile they have to find a job. Earlier, it was providing food along with accommodation. At present, fully furnished kitchen is made available for them. The inmates prepare food for own like their home.

The church council (Sabha) always extended a positive approach to transgender. *Our Bishop helped a transgender by giving twenty eight thousand rupees for opening a juice shop in NGO quarters. But she didn’t continue that venture and she sold that shop. In Kerala there is only one initiation like this,* said the Mother.

As per the Bishop, NGOs need to take more initiative to raise funds for such organizations. He said, *when we strengthen this way, it will evolve into a law. This social movement should be a partnership act between NGOs, government sector and various religious institutions.*

Family support

The Mother superior pointed that the students are mostly from poor households and of single headed families. Along with their revelation, during their adolescent period, they will be compelled to move out from their ancestral home. As the Government has provided 2% quota in admissions at degree level courses more students approached Bhavan for accommodation. *Some of them joined the college as male students and later revealed their identity. The situation in Ernakulam and transgender friendly attitude is a shield for this vulnerable community especially in their adolescent period,* added Mother Superior. Bishop is of the opinion that for better family support to the transgender, the society, stigma etc. needs to be changed. *Artists, cinema, political leaders and everyone have an important role in this transformation of the society. They can help rebuild the social consciousness. In our society if an individual is having any differences or if that person is out of our conventional norms, they will be getting a stigma based on that.*

Bhavan keeps in touch with the inmates who have gone out after getting any job or marriage. Most of them attend the functions in the Bhavan. Mother Superior pointed out that the centre acts as a meeting point for the parents who are afraid to accept the sexual orientation of their child due to pressure from society or intimate relatives. *‘Some of them were meeting after a long time and parents are happy that their child is safe in the shelter of Bhavan’*, said Mother Superior with pride. Several of the transgender are afraid of their siblings’ especially elder or younger brother. Hence when came to know, parents come and meet their transgender child in secret.

None of the inmates have gone back to their home after reaching the Bhavan. Mother Superior told that she regularly advises them to go back to their own family. *‘But they could not go, because if any of them is having elder or younger brother they will chase them away. Due to their bitter experience from the family they are not ready to go back’*.

The revelation of a boy as transgender will make complicated issues in a normal family. The society needs to be trained for handling such issues. As far as parents are concerned, they will be in great dilemma to support the revealed boy or the other children. The transgender will lose

everything in his/her life and will end up in streets where a miserable situation is waiting them. The children are too young to be left in the streets at this age. But the inner pressure forces them to reveal their sexual orientation. The struggling parents will be in a confused stage to recognize whether their kid is a boy or a girl. The term transgender may not be that familiar for them. The collapse of family system will be the output of this act. The parents need to be trained to support their kids and ensure proper education to their kids.

Atmosphere and infrastructure

The spiritual atmosphere in the Bhavan gave mental support to each of the transgender. *At this circumstance, they need emotional support from us. They are just like anyone of us. The care given by us has secured several of them from vulnerable conditions. We provide dormitory accommodation to all of them. Due to different reasons, individual or double accommodation is not possible here. 'Our students are studying well and participate in the evening mass. They say the prayer is a blessing for them'*, said the Mother.

'The timing of the Bhavan is strict as they have to get back to the centre before 7 in the evening. There is little chance for them to engage in other activities like sex work. We allowed employees in the metro to enter the Bhavan as per their shift timings. There were no such issues as pointed by some of them. We cannot further relax the policies of a congregation, added the Mother.

Surgery and Hormone therapy

'The transgender people now a days wanted to undergo surgery very much to fulfill their desired gender status. Earlier, it was not the situation. None of them were talking about surgery or therapy when I was in Mumbai. The new generation transgender people are more aware of the development in their field and they want completeness, informed the Mother Superior. Bhavan provides short stay facility to those coming to Ernakulam in connection with their treatment from other districts. *'It is a blessing for transgender from other districts. The daily or weekly visits to hospital require hotel accommodation and for the poor transgender it is not affordable'*, added the Mother.

Bhavan provides special care to those undergoing hormonal therapy. During this time due to hormonal imbalances, they will be in depression. The treatment cost is a major issue for majority of the transgender persons. The medicines need to be taken before the treatment, continuous lab tests and consultation charges also cost large amounts to the transgender. Though the Government has initiated refunding the surgery cost of the transgender people by providing all the bills and vouchers, it takes years to get the refund of the actual cost. Till the time, they have to pay the interest of the debt also. Sometimes the mentor transgender person (Mummy) affords the cost of the treatment. The situation urges most of them to collect money through sex work.

Educational attainment and Job security

Bhavan allows students of different ages to stay there. An 18 year transgender is the youngest of the inmates presently. As there is no advertisement about the centre, many of the current inmates came to know the centre from their community mentors. Bhavan supports educational attainment of the inmates above all. There are several inmates who have more than one master's degree. However, there is serious delay in getting employment for the transgender people. The Mother Superior suggested giving a quota in government jobs for the transgender community to ensure their representation. This will solve their issues at a large level and indirectly reduce the transphobia in the society.

The opening in KMRL was a bliss for the transgender community especially those in the Bhavan. All were in high expectation. However, many of them got disappointed in their status as contractual employees under Kudumbashree. However, the societal acceptance it has brought is enormous.

Generally, transgender students approach the centre after a certain age. After expelling from their home, they spent most of their time (sometimes several years) with transgender community. Engaged in sex work, travel to other states where transgender (Hijras) have more acceptability and search for employment for livelihood are generally done during this time. Mother Superior pointed that, the trend has changed and some students even directly approach the Bhavan for accommodation whenever they take the decision to reveal their sexual orientation.

Bhavan does not provide any services like training, assistance to find job etc. to the transgender. It provides orientation to the students within the limitations of the congregation. Support to higher education is also provided in the centre. Several of the inmates are searching for job after completion of their study and then leave the Bhavan, but keep in touch with the Mother. For several of the students, the cost of education is met by their partner.

The mental distress, each of them is experiencing is enormous. Discontinuation of education further doubles their vulnerability. Mother added that some of the students there are highly intelligent, but now they concentrate on easy subjects as they say that they lost their confidence. The mental crisis which they faced in their life adversely affects their education. If they get proper education they will find a dignified job.

Our students are good in art also. They have deep interest in extra-curricular activities. However, due to some reasons, they are hesitant to present their talent in colleges. We encourage them by giving coaching. They are specially invited and asked to perform in the functions in our schools and colleges. It enhanced their confidence level. During the programmes, they use to mingle with other students also. They gained a confidence to face the society. Sometimes, we plan tour programmes with our inmates, said Mother.

Behavior of transgender inmates

'I do not find any difference in them. They are just like other members in our other convents. They are lovable. Sometimes they quarrel with others like other children. It is we who need to change our perspective towards them', Mother expressed her attitude to transgender students in the congregation. The behavioural changes among the transgender are closely noticed by the officials of the Bhavan. Mother pointed out that, they try to grow their hair, beautify their face and sometimes wear fashionable dress also. They like to be beautiful just like other girls of that age. They will be more aggressive as the inner truth was suppressed by the society for a long period of time. Mother said that they are very punctual in attending prayer and keep strict timings of the Bhavan. Parents do come and meet them. They are also allowed to go and meet their parents. Some of them have partners and they also go and meet them.

'Sometimes they even fight with each other, but in the evening everything will be okay', added the Mother. During the period of hormonal therapy, due to the imbalance in the hormone level some issues were reported in the centre. With the support of other sisters, Mother Superior solved all these problems with love and affection towards transgender persons.

'I like the way they prepare themselves, wearing girl's attires, polish nails with different colours, straightening hairthey enjoy their gifted feminism', Mother happily said .

Further Collaboration

Though government is open to support the Bhavan, the authorities are afraid to start similar ventures in other places. *'Primarily it is not a business. It has its own complication. We cannot run this like a hostel. We have to understand and observe their psychological conditions. So if we consider it like initiating other hostels without any proper understanding it won't be a fruitful act. Proper understanding and sincerity is necessary for initiating a firm like this. We have to boost their confidence'*, concluded Mother Superior.

The Bishop pointed out that instead of more Jyothis Bhavan, social inclusion of transgender is essential. The mindset of the society needs to change. They have to accept the differences among people. All the people in the society has the mindset to help them, they can show humanity towards the transgender community. But to take this concern into a collective consciousness, we need proper leadership. Without such a strong leadership, these centres won't be successful.

4.3.1 Case Study: Name J1

J1 was a resident of Chalakudy, Thrissur and from an orthodox Christian family. She was living with her parents and younger sister. *'When I was in ninth standard I started to realize my condition. I started to know more about this LGBTQ community through internet. Social media also helped me to understand more. During that time itself, my neighbourhood used to mock at me. My classmates and others in the school also teased me and were miserable to continue there, even before revelation'*. However, she didn't stop her education and completed her higher secondary school as a day scholar. *I still remember when I was in tenth standard my neighbourhood asked me not to study further and warned me about harassment. But I continued my studies. When I was in plus one I started to hide my feelings, but people use to ask me about*

my different behaviour. This made me more silent. I was aware that, even if we hide our identity, it will come out naturally. During a cultural event I danced. My identity started to be visible from that point of time, said J1.

Being a pure orthodox family, parents were not ready to accept my changes. Slowly my mother and sister understood the changes in me. My father was not ready to accept me. As an auto driver he faced several bad comments from his colleagues.

Through internet J1 understood the acceptance of her community in the city of Ernakulam and joined as Bachelor of Islamic History at Maharaja's College. *'The experiences in the college have really helped me to reveal myself. In the beginning I was alone and then AA (another transgender person from the Jyothis Bhavan) joined there. AA has already revealed herself and her company made me more comfortable. One day, I revealed her about my identity. I was planning to reveal my sexual orientation after reaching a good position in my life. But I could not tolerate more. My classmates understood about my condition. But my worry was something else. People will blame AA for my revelation. We had many trans students in other classes in Maharajas. My mummy BB was also pursuing her studies in the college'.*

J1 was aware of the modern ways of revelation. *'I have uploaded a picture in social media with a gay attributes. All my family came to know and they said that I have joined in transgender community. So they asked me not to come home. They asked me to stay in Ernakulam itself. But I took this moment as an opportunity to reveal my identity. I informed the social justice department and contacted sister in Jyothis Bhavan for my accommodation. We have a faculty member in the English department who stand for the transgender students; she helped to inform the social justice department'.*

'The next day I was really worried about the comments of my class mates. I went to college in my girl's attire on that day. All my classmates accepted and welcomed me. Entire Maharajas stood with me. I got a reputation in my college after revealing my identity. Now I have more friends. I want to become a social worker. I want to study in a central university. I want to go abroad as a woman, stopped J1.

Case Study 2: Name J2

Hailing from Kunnankulam, Thrissur, J2 is a proud transgender person who succeeded in her life through employment. She was born in a Hindu family. Her family belonged to economically backward condition as her father was working in a hotel and mother as a house maid. J2, aged 26 completed her education up to +2 level and then started working for her family as a male breadwinner.

During schooldays itself she felt some abnormal changes inside her compared to other male friends. Due to some childhood illnesses, J2 joined school late and her sister was in her class also. She spent time with her younger sister and her friends mostly. On the way to school, she noticed the gay men of Kunnankulam. They also noticed me due to my way of walking and body language. *'They are not like transgender. They grow beard and always in a male look. But earn a lot from paid sex'*, she said. *'One day I went with them for a road show for transgender people. Their life changed my way of thinking. I was having the feeling of a female inside me, and that was more than a gay man. It was easy to continue life with them without informing anybody. They are married, but go for sex work at night. But I realized that I will lose my life and end up like them, teased by everyone publicly and used secretly'*, she mentioned.

She revealed her identity in her family. The reaction was severe as her father asked her to stop her studies and asked to join some job for the family. Her mother and sister accepted her new identity. *'My father was working in Coimbatore; he was afraid of the hijra culture there and so he was not able to accept me. I started my working life as a sales man in a fancy shop. I worked hard for my family. I thought I may use some amount for my personal needs. I was supposed to pay electricity charges, cable and house rent and some loan repayment also. For a better employment I joined another firm, where the shop owner insisted me for sex. I left the firm immediately'*.

'I understood that the family won't support me. I wanted to reach my own identity and the household debts bounded me to continue the old role. I stopped going for work. I went to Ernakulam and started my hormone therapy as a pre requisite for my sex reassignment surgery in a private hospital there. Accommodation was a big issue at that time. I found one of my friends there. She is a transgender sex worker. We stayed in a hotel. When she goes for sex work,

people come there for me. It was really horrible. I never opened the door. I came back home but the condition was not favourable. Soon with the support of a student political leader, I went to another woman's house. That family helped me a lot. But locals were irritating us. We were three girls there. Locals asked my friend's younger brother to bring me for them. They used to come there at night and tried to touch me through the window. I continued my treatment there. The side effects of the treatment made me self-abusive. Once I cut my vein also. My friend's father was worried of the aftereffects of such actions. So I quit there and went to another woman's home whom I met during the road show. She was working in a medical shop and brought me medicines for three months. Her husband was also supportive. Soon, the locals murmured about my presence in the house and started to verbally abuse my friend's husband. So I decided to quit there but was wondering where to go? All the doors were closed for me. My friend was not ready to leave me, but I made them believe that I received a call from my family.

I reached the bus stand by 2.30 in the afternoon and stood there till 5.30 in the evening. I was not aware where to go and whom to approach. I was totally weeping. In the darkness, people started to notice me and I got into a Kozhikode bus. I was wondering where to get down. I took ticket to Kozhikode. Meanwhile 'Faizal Faizu', a transgender activist called me and asked me to come Ernakulam. I became happy, but I had no money. I asked the girl sitting nearby me for Rs. 100. Without asking any further questions, she gave me the amount. I thanked her and said that I am a transgender woman. Surprisingly, she hugged me and made me confident. She persuaded me to get down at Pattambi and took me to her home. Her father brought me food and I stayed in her room. She gave me her bed and chose floor for her. The next morning her mother prepared breakfast for me and gave me another Rs. 100 also. She still remembers that family with gratitude and pointed out that their support prevented her from sex work.

After reaching Ernakulam, she stayed in Mudra, a government shelter home for transgender community. Due to administrative issues and mismatches in fund utilization, the firm got closed and she was taken to Jyothis Bhavan. 'It was a real relief for me. I was comfortable in the Bhavan. The friendly approach of the authorities helped me to become confident and even helped me to restart relationship with my family. Now I believe in Jesus Christ and the prayer give me more strength'.

Meanwhile, one of her +2 classmates married her sister. It eased her reentry into her ancestral home. That boy was a good friend of mine and he also accepts me. *'I occasionally go home wearing Chudidar and at first people started to glare at me. Even I go to nearby shops where I used to go when I was staying there. I felt no difference, as they talked to me the same way they used to talk me in the earlier days. **Amma says that now people even don't notice when I come and go back. Except my father, all accept me**'.*

*'Now, I am in a relationship with a male friend, who is a truck driver. He approached me during a programme. He is from Nair community. His mother and sister are aware of our relationship. We go out occasionally and during special occasions, we together go to my home and stay there. My family likes him. He is meeting my surgery costs and other daily needs. **After surgery and his sister's marriage we will get knot**', she expressed her happiness. We will have sex mostly but not in hotels. When he lost his job due to Covid-19, I supported him to find one in Ernakulam and now stay in a hostel here. He is a family person and never wants to come out of the family. So we decided to marry with the support of his family members only. His mother is having the information that I am a trans-woman and completed my surgery also.*

The huge amount required for surgery is my big worry. From where will I find this amount? If Government directly transfers the cost of surgery to the hospital, we will be out of bankruptcy. Many of the transgender persons go for sex work mainly for meeting the cost of surgery. Some people go for the same for their happiness.

She recollected some of her abuses in the childhood and explained how she reacted and rescued herself from it. It was from her neighborhood when she went for watching TV there. But she stopped it at the beginning itself and ran out of the house. Another incident happened during her way back from school. It was an old aged person. He tried to hug her. The next day, her uncle accompanied her and that man fled from there. She pointed out that her surroundings helped her to take bold decisions.

'Balancing the life of transgender is very difficult. Finding a safe accommodation is important. Otherwise family should protect them. I got the support of some families during my struggling times. They protected me. Mostly transgender end up either in suicide or sex work. Protect and educate them is the best way', she stopped.

Case Study 3: Name J3

J3 is a positive transgender who completed her education with the support of community organizations. She completed her post-graduation. Born and brought up in a poor Hindu family, J3 never owned a house. They were staying in rented houses. In her childhood, her parents separated and she started to stay with her aunt's house. Nobody was interested to give accommodation to her mother and sister. One of her aunts provided accommodation to them.

From the childhood itself, J3 was having the body language of females. *As I was staying in my aunt's house, my cousin started to abuse me. He occasionally sexually abused me. The forced sex ruined me completely. I was not able to speak for some days. Relatives asked me the reason, but I was not able to reveal it. His younger brother was just like me. He was never interested in girls. So we stayed together. One day, when my cousin sexually abused me I told my sister. My aunt used to say that her son approaches me due to my body language. Even the family members won't support us when we complain about abuses.*

Later, due to difficulty in managing my mother we admitted her in a mental hospital. My sister continued in one of aunt's house. I used to go for part-time jobs for our livelihood. Accommodation remained a big issue for us. During the time of degree level education, I tried a lot to change my sexual orientation. But it was not possible.

People think that it is under our control. They are not aware of the chemistry of a transgender. I experienced abuses at bus stops especially by elderly persons aged more than my father. At college, I was always in the company of girls. I was studious and wanted to make a career in the teaching field.

For continuing her studies, she joined a hostel. There she experienced several abuses. It was miserable to live in the hostel along with part-time jobs. *I left hostel. I used to take bath in the hospital toilet for weeks and stayed in the hospital corridor. Then one of my friends suggested to meet Karyalay (office) of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). They helped me to complete my studies for three years. Even they allowed me to stay in the office for three months. They provided me hostel facility from their fund. They funded for my PG also. During the time of lock down they advised me to join Jyothis Bhavan, as they have financial constraints. Here I changed my attitude towards life. Now I believe in Jesus Christ. I have determination in my life to become*

a college teacher. My sister got married and I wanted to bring back my mother also. Here, I got a mummy (community mother). She takes care of my studies. My mummy will help me to do the surgery. I will do it in Bengaluru, as the system in Kerala is very poor.

She is strongly against sex work by the transgender. She suggested other occupation for the livelihood of transgender. Sex work is sometimes initiated by the transgender persons. She said that they are not able to suppress their sexual orientation. They sometimes quarrel for their customers also. In the Bhavan itself several persons invited me for sex work for earning. But I rejected it. If a person decided not to involve in sex work, she can continue in that way with the support of community, she stopped.

4.4 Conclusion

The initiatives by the Government of Kerala to ensure shelter to the disadvantaged community are appreciable. At the same time, most of such initiatives do not serve their vision to the targeted community. Jyothis Bhavan is a typical example of such centres which responds positively to the needs of transgender. The collective leadership is an essential part of such organizations. Though Bhavan was not successful in providing long term accommodation to employees of KMRL, it acted as a home for numerous transgender students. It boosts employability among them and their family will be happy by the safe atmosphere of the Bhavan.

It is clear that other socially committed organizations are also helping the transgender community. Establishing a shelter for transgender will be difficult for social organizations, but they can change the mindset of the community and family and ensure acceptance of transgender. The best shelter for a transgender is his/her home. Support by parents and other intimate family members will be a blessing and safeguard them to get away from all negative health behaviours.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

The chaotic conditions of the third genders are an endless story. They were harassed, deprived and socially invisible even after implementing different policies and supporting measures. The second half of the past decade has witnessed several governmental movements in India for the welfare of transgender since the historical verdict of Honourable Supreme Court in 2014. The transgender persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2016, prohibited discrimination against a transgender person, including unfair treatment or denial of service in relation to employment, education, healthcare, access to public goods and facilities, etc. Also, in 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized homosexuality by striking down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, terming it unconstitutional in respect of consensual homosexual sex between adults. Such actions provide a space for the Indian transgender in the mainstream of the society. The National Human Rights Commission reported that about 92 percent of transgender (TOI, 2018) are deprived of the right to participate in any form of economic activity in the country, with even qualified ones are refused jobs. During the last years of the previous decade, several states in India come forward with unconventional policy initiations to bring the transgender community in the core of the society. Among them, the steps taken by Kerala are specially appreciated.

Generally, transgender persons are invisible in public places in Kerala. Fear of exclusion from family, discontinuation of studies or being fired from their workplaces are the major reasons for the invisible nature of transgender in Kerala. The culture of Guru-Chela, Master-Disciple or Mother–Daughter system (Mummy system) also started in Kerala in recent years and it initially acts as a supportive system for the welfare of transgender. Transgender suffer discrimination at various places, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, homelessness, lack of medical facilities, depression, abuses like high usage of hormone pill, tobacco and alcohol etc.

Negative experiences at the time of schooling such as discrimination from school games, teasing from friends, physical harassment and avoidance by the teachers accelerate dropout among them.

Community and family pressure to get married is a factor that hastens them to leave home or commit suicide. For ensuring a livelihood many of them travel through Coimbatore to Bengaluru and joins Hijra community. In both places, they have to work for their 'guru' or caregiver by engaging in sex work, collecting money from public through begging, etc. Forced surgery without proper medical aid is also prevalent there.

The Expert committee (2014) for transgender has recommended adopting a convergence approach for the welfare of the said community through providing job opportunities. It suggested utilizing different schemes for the welfare of the marginalized communities for the benefit of transgender persons. After the implementation of the transgender policy in 2015, Kerala formulated several programmes to overcome the job related barriers. The Public Service Commission in Kerala has given an option to include –third gender in the application form. The social security board has provided an entrepreneur loan of Rs. 50,000 to transgender persons who are interested in self-employment. Under the skill development programme, training on driving, beautician course etc. were imparted to interested beneficiaries in the State. All these have reflected in the society. However, opening of Kochi metro and innovations of Kudumbashree mission have received more attention with appropriate media coverage.

The entry into Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) was a historical step towards mainstreaming transgender in Kerala in 2016. The movement was successful in recruiting 23 transgender persons in various departments at KMRL. However, within a short period of time, more than half of them were withdrawn from there and complained absence of proper accommodation and lack of justifiable salary as the reasons. Jyothis Bhavan and some governmental ventures have initially provided accommodation for the employees in KMRL. Meanwhile Kudumbashree initiated several Ayalkoottam (NHGs) exclusively for transgender community. It has boosted entrepreneurship among them. However, the spread of Covid-19 and continuous lockdown followed by it and other issues slowed down such initiatives to further achieve new heights. With this backdrop the present study assesses the work life of transgender community in Kerala through initiatives like KMRL, Kudumbashree and Jyothis Bhavan.

KMRL received global attention when it appointed 23 transgender employees in various positions through Kudumbashree. Kudumbashree played the role in inviting the transgender into

the metro. The real reason behind the appointment of transgender needed to be further explored. The two dimensions of the issue, however favours the involvement of police department in solving the issue related to the arrest of some transgender while collecting money in train. However, it was described as the social responsibility of both management of KMRL and Kudumbashree. The management team collectively accepted the issues like accommodation unavailability, transportation issues, dissatisfaction on salary etc. as the major problems behind the dropout of transgender. Nevertheless, it has boosted other attempts especially in the public sector segment. The management wing was open to all the Kudumbashree employees and never discriminated any of the transgender employees.

The one month training programme provided at Rajagiri has almost covered all the components. The presence of transgender people in KMRL has indirectly reduced the societal stigma towards the community. The interviews with managerial and other employees are evident of this. They said that they had found no difference between the transgender and other Kudumbashree staff. Moreover, KMRL has never tried to provide special preferences to any section of employees. Through this approach, they have tried to establish the fact that all employees are same and considered in equal manner. Similarly, transgender community also learned the official behavior and office manners.

The engagement in KMRL has gifted unprecedented social acceptance to the transgender community and it restricted many of them from sex work. Though the salary was comparatively less in KMRL, they have withdrawn from sex work due to their new social status. Family acceptance was another benefit received by the community. Even if some of them have earlier worked in private firms, this job has increased their reputation. Assured salary, frequently meeting the public, one month long training, association with large number of Kudumbashree workers and supervisors and the opportunity to share the problems with others etc. brightened their life.

The demand of opportunity based on educational qualifications was denied by KMRL by pointing that they are appointed through Kudumbashree. KMRL was happy to receive back those who left the firm. But they were not revising their policy at the same time. The remarks regarding punctuality, maintenance of office records, and obeying particular rules like non-use of mobile phones etc. were need to be discussed with the transgender community and special

training needed to be provided to control their short temperedness. Practicing Yoga and Dhyanam will be effective for reducing depression and ensuring self-control among them.

The solution to the issue of withdrawal of transgender community mainly dealt with the lower salary. During the process, though transgender have raised the demand for direct employment, it was not considered as it was not in the purview of KMRL. The General Manager of Operations and Safety has said that they were always keen to hear from transgender employees and ensured monthly meetings with all employees. He, however, dismissed the demand for inclusion of transgender as permanent employees in KMRL and added that ticketing and housekeeping were outsourced to Kudumbashree and division within the group will destroy the harmony there. At this juncture, the community responsibility of the firm should have focussed on this marginalized community. If KMRL had viewed them through such responsibility, the effect of the programme would have been more positive. The numbers of transgender staff are very less compared to other categories and special preference needs to be provided. **To boost the confidence and increase the satisfaction level of the transgender employees, promotions based on qualification may be introduced in the firm.**

Accommodation, which emerged as a major reason behind the failure of appointment of transgender in KMRL, was never in the agenda of the authorities. It is clear that the project lack a feasibility study before implementation. If such a study was framed and the results were based for the inclusion of transgender community, they would have been successful in reducing the number of withdrawal. The fear of public towards transgender as well as social issues like concentration of trans people in the area and anxiety over sex work also played major roles in denying accommodation to transgender employees. KMRL has also failed in providing transportation facility to the transgender doing night duty. For that also, they have their own argument. But the timing of shift needs to be kept in mind while denying such benefits.

The community responsibility of KMRL has failed in identifying the issues of transgender especially accommodation, night travel, huge amount needed for sex reassignment surgery etc. Neither KMRL nor Kudumbashree provided any financial assistance for the surgery or hormone therapy. Special schemes may be implemented in this regard. Channelizing the reputation of the firm for encouraging such medical assistance or providing awareness classes etc. were absent in

KMRL. The abuse they have experienced on the way to work or return has not been considered by the firm.

Transgender persons experienced agony during their entire life, even before revelation. The nature and behaviour of such persons need to be specially considered in a firm. The side effects of hormone therapy like short temperedness, depression and prolonged anxiety etc. were never considered by the authorities. Even the hardness of their sound has been a matter of discussion among the managerial staff at the top level discussions regarding quality of service at KMRL.

The policy of considering all the contractual staff equally seems to be brilliant, but it is unrealistic at the same time. In the annual report of KMRL, they have not mentioned transgender people. During the period of Covid-19 also, no help was rendered to them. When they were in deep famine, KMRL has not extended any sort of help. The weekly paid off and travel assistance for night shift etc. is sanctioned after the agitations by the transgender. The said report also points out that the CSR fund of the firm is kept unutilized. The accommodation and medical assistance may be given to the transgender under the CSR fund.

Generally, the women Kudumbashree members who were appointed along with transgender employees were little bit worried and scared to work with the third gender community at KMRL. It was their first acquaintance with a transgender. Not only the Kudumbashree workers, but also their family members were concerned with the presence of transgender employees. At the same time, working together with other employees, offered more acceptances to transgender people. The trans phobia among the Kudumbashree workers slowly disappeared. The Kudumbashree team members pointed out changes in the attitude of managerial staff as a reason for the large number of dropout of transgender from KMRL.

The transgender employees believe that their entry into KMRL was a media hype and nothing deals with KMRL's social responsibility. It helped KMRL to be in the limelight. The expectation the community had was huge and in reality it was not beneficial especially financially. As per the employees, accommodation was assured by the authorities during the training. Later they provided the same in Jyothis Bhavan. But this step was taken without considering their status of surgery. The dormitory arrangements were not suitable for such people. *“There were persons who underwent surgery, partially done the same, under hormone therapy and those who were*

only initiated the same. Some of them were still males. Then how can they stay in the same room with dormitory accommodation, sharing the same bathroom and without dressing rooms for changing dress". These words reveal the real picture of the problem they have faced with their accommodation. Unavailability of staff toilet at stations was also raised as an example of non-labor friendly attitude of KMRL.

Transgender community in the city got surprised by the decision to include transgender persons in the core of KMRL. They understood the realities when the selection process considered them for the two low level categories - Housekeeping and Ticketing, without taking into account of their educational qualification or experience. After completion of training only, they came to know that they were appointed as contract staff under Kudumbashree and not by KMRL. This was pointed as one of the major reasons for failure of the project. The rest continued in KMRL for social acceptance rather than financial benefit.

The daily living cost of a transgender employee and a Kudumbashree employee in the same category is extremely different. A Kudumbashree woman worker is supported by her family and she might not be the principal breadwinner of her family. In the case of transgender employees, they have to bear the entire expenditure of his/her family including food and accommodation. The authorities have to understand the mental distress a transgender traverse through in their life. After the duty time, they change their dress and go to the dark corridors of street for earning money through sex work. KMRL has dismissed 5 transgender employees who were arrested in a police raid at hotel. They have not taken any steps to support the staff.

Transgender workers are of the feeling that Kudumbashree fellow workers are utilizing the benefit of their agitations. *"Kudumbashree workers won't instigate any demand as the income from KMRL is an additional one for their household while it is essential for us. During the long lockdown period, no salary was provided. We were starving and after approaching the honourable court only, we received free kit from the state government"*. However, transgender employees enjoyed the status they received through their employment. It has also enhanced their personal capacity to meet others and talk with confidence.

Those from the lower strata of education find it more helpful and some even pointed out as a bliss in their life. The job in KMRL persuaded them to keep the status of their post. Hence, many

of them shifted to flats, though it costs them more. The people nearby started recognizing them. It gave them a good position and moreover acceptance to a marginalized group. The office atmosphere experienced by many of them made them more polite. Sharing of daytoday experiences and issues to the colleagues was a big relief for most of them. Another important feature is the interaction with passengers especially for those posted in Ticketing section. The respect received from passengers and the value of service provided to them boosted the confidence level of transgender workers.

The collective activities by KMRL during special occasions paved way for mutual understanding among the workers. It melted the huge misunderstanding of each category of employee to others. The artistic talents of transgender persons received wide acceptance in the cultural programs organized by KMRL. Recognition by KMRL, Kudumbashree and passengers has enabled transgender to come out of the shelves.

Keeping transgender in the core of the program helped to reduce domestic violence especially partner violence to a certain level. Opportunities to discuss such issues with higher level staff and awareness on laws regarding transgender rights etc. empowered each of the employees. *“It is painful to live in this society with the label of a sex worker. KMRL has given us an opportunity to escape from this and live the life with dignity”* , the words of a 42 year aged transgender who formerly was forced to earn money from sex work in the city is worth to reveal the bright side of the program.

Entry into KMRL has paved way for collaboration among transgender persons. Social media also helped to stay connected while they were posted in different stations. It helped to communicate regarding treatment facilities, issues related to the same and understanding each other. As their issues are identical, the bond developed among them got strengthened during these years.

It is to be noted that some of the transgender persons were already engaged in better employment before joining KMRL. Many of them joined the venture to enhance the initiation and want for societal acceptance. Work place harassment is also felt by them at KMRL. The main disadvantage of the mission is the absence of a platform to discuss the issues of transgender to higher authorities. They should get a place in such forums.

Attitude of society especially orthodox mindset of religious leaders has to change and accept the transgender community. Though family members accept them, due to pressure from the community leaders, they were excluded from various functions. The experiences shared by the fellow transgender pointed out the importance of family support. Whenever, a transgender has been protected by her family in her adolescence, she could be able to complete her education and be free from sexual abuses.

The withdrawal of transgender employees from KMRL has negatively affected the confidence level of the community. Several of them were pulled back to sex work for livelihood. The community responsibility is missing in the activities of both Kudumbashree and KMRL in terms of providing service benefits to transgender employees. It failed to uplift according to the need of this marginalized community.

Kudumbashree has played a pivotal role in bringing the transgender employees to the core of KMRL. Apart from this, the community organizations like NHGs has encouraged several transgender people to join together and become entrepreneurs for a better life for them. Though several programmes have been developed like Gender Sensitization Programme, Gender desk, and Snehitha, these programmes were aimed primarily to sensitize both boys and girls but transgender or other categories were not covered. However, through the initiation of several neighbourhood organizations which turned in to an entrepreneurship, Kudumbashree has visualized the fact that transgender are to be placed in the mainstream job folios without any discrimination.

Discussion with the officials of Kudumbashree suggested initiating Gender programs for higher level government officials. Teasing, sexy-jokes and bullying etc. from the general population always hurt transgender and pull them back from mainstream activities. Programs should be developed from the transgender community itself. Imposing tailored models won't fit the transgender community like any other marginalized community.

Pandemic has negatively affected the NHGs and transgender people particularly. Different from area based Ayalkoottams, NHGs of transgender were not able to meet regularly. This has restricted their service delivery and hence affected livelihood also. The three initiatives studied in detail pointed out that the efforts of Kudumbashree has strengthened the transgender community to become self-sufficient in terms of employment. Training rendered to them has sufficiently upgraded their capacity as an entrepreneur. The confidence level of the members of the NHGs is the proof of this.

The team leaders of Kudumbashree pointed out no difficulty in managing the transgender units. Further, they are happy with the members having own ideas of self-employment. However, lockdown has affected all the initiations by the transgender NHGs. At the same time, units like Oruma in Palakkad has earned apparently in the lockdown period also. Measures to utilize the opportunities and assistance from Government are necessary in continuing the efforts of NHGs of transgender persons. The hope and enthusiasm of transgender persons in initiating as entrepreneurs need to be continued. The ventures like Nicy Chips and Oruma TG canteen has not only benefitted the transgender community, but it has become livelihood for other members also. The detailed study of these units suggested the need of afresh attitude of local people towards transgender initiatives. There is a strong need of local support but the community does not act accordingly. The support of social security mission to learn driving also helped them to manage their business.

Initiation like Jyothis Bhavan short stay homes started by government of Kerala has rendered great support to the transgender community especially those expelled from their ancestral homes. Lack of awareness of parents, other family members and local people is the main reason for expulsion of transgender students from their homes. The support and care rendered by the family cannot get from elsewhere. By allowing a transgender child to flee from home, the parents let them in highly vulnerable conditions.

Generally, transgender students approach the centre after a certain age. After expelling from their home, they spent most of their time (sometimes several years) with transgender community. Engaging in sex work, travel to other states where transgender (Hijras) have more acceptability

and search for employment for livelihood are generally done during this time. However, the trend has changed and some students even directly approach the Bhavan for accommodation whenever they take the decision to reveal their sexual orientation. The new development in the field of transgender world including the implementation of several bills and decriminalization of homosexuality has however, boosted the confidence of transgender community. The educated transgender people engaging in various sectors of employment will offer better accessibility to them and also reduce the level of abuse also.

The triangulation of three sets of case studies clearly brings out the necessity of proper education, shelter and employment for the betterment of this marginalized community. A collaborative action of these factors will secure them from vulnerable conditions existing in the society. The unexpected lockdown might have forced several transgender to re-enter sex work for their livelihood. Kudumbashree and other initiatives can save a large among them from deprivation.

The present study has revealed only the tip of the iceberg of the issues the transgender community experiences. Further studies are essential especially for documenting self-employment and collective strategies by various organizations for transgender community. The government has initiated various schemes for ensuring shelter for the transgender community. Such initiatives need to be studied further.

5.2 Suggestions

a) Community participation

Community organizations including family, society and religious leaders can play a crucial role in reducing the vulnerability of transgender community. The study recommends the following suggestions

1. Gender sensitization is needed to be given in all sort of community organizations
2. Parents should be given awareness regarding existence of different types of sexual identities apart from the conventional binary system
3. Ayalkoottam, Anganwadi and ASHA workers need to be utilized for sensitizing the community they are living

4. Religious leaders need to play a pivotal role in reducing the taboo of transgender
5. Issuing Ration card to each transgender, if expelled from home will ensure food security to them

b) Education and employment

The role of educational institutes is important in reducing the stigma of transgender in the society.

1. The school authorities should focus on the behavioural changes among the students
2. Early identification of transgender students must be done in the schools.
3. The School Health Programme need to be utilized for it. The nodal teachers need to be trained for the same.
4. Measures should be adopted to prevent drop-out of the transgender students
5. Gender-neutral toilets need to be established in schools.
6. Educational grants may be introduced for ensuring better education and prevent dropout among them.
7. The employment departments need to form gender clubs in which transgender people may be given membership
8. Reservation in public sector employment for this marginalized community will boost their confidence level
9. The department of Labour should form special teams to monitor workplace harassment experienced by transgender people
10. Providing incentives to firms for appointing transgender employees will generate more employment for transgender people

c) Health sector

The health sector needs to be equipped to provide medical support to the transgender people. Creation of awareness is necessary among the community.

1. Health requirements of transgender need to be prioritized in primary health care services
2. Awareness regarding hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery, its side effects etc. need to be broadcasted through media.
3. The cost of hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery may be included in the Ayushman Bharath health card.
4. Cashless treatment needs to be provided to the transgender people.

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