CONCLUSION

In a progressive society, the woman must be given priority and they should be empowered. This study which has been based on “The Christian Concept of Woman and empowerment in Portuguese India in the 19th and 20th Centuries” has tried to show how the position of women began to undergo a change from colonial rule to the present.

This is an analysis of female empowerment in all walks of life, in particular sectors hitherto alienated by male dominion. Empowered women were, only in a biological sense; to the extent that they could mould the minds of their offspring, but that was the limit. Such ‘transactions of influence’ were largely in the scope of maternal-filial relationships. Hence a formal social perception of her empowered state was a far from reality. How strange indeed that such moulding of impressionable minds by a woman, and in that sense her contribution to character building of nation has been underplayed and sidetracked? Perhaps it would not be unreasonable to postulate that these “masking” of woman’s social status synergized by the poor social codes and legislations of the times than leading to her deprivation of a position of formal dignity is seemingly a deliberate design of the ‘man’ kind with a mindset that could not appreciate gender equity.
Goa was strategically positioned on the central west coast of India. In the zenith of its prosperity, Goa was the centre to which the enterprising people of almost all the countries of the East flocked for commercial purposes. The first among them to conquer areas on the west coast of India was Portugal.

Portugal being a poor country, could not afford to send large number of soldiers to India and was not able to pay them a high salary. Besides, the distances to the overseas colonies were great and travelling by sea was perilous; extreme climatic conditions; due to several diseases and lack of medical care, many died on the way. The Portuguese women would not be able to understand the odds of the long voyages on the Portuguese Caravels. Therefore, the Portuguese men in the early period migrated to India without their wives. They regarded women in Índia Portuguesa as their substitutes for their spouses left in Portugal.

This had a significant implication in the life style of women in Portuguese India, particularly Goa, an old colony of Portugal on the west coast of India.

Social change:

The Portuguese influenced not only the way of life but even the character formation of a woman especially a Christian woman in Portuguese India. She was found imitating the Portuguese women in her talk, in her manners, in her dress, in food habits, etc. On each and every important occasion there would be banquets and
dances where she would take part without any restriction whatsoever. While her Hindu counterpart talked with no strangers except the servants at home or artisans employed, the Christian women would have no reservation to talk with any stranger. Again while the Hindu woman talked with her elders covering her head or covering her mouth, no such formalities were observed by Christian woman, who was found seated along with her elders, facing them and discussing any matters. The Portuguese government made a difference on the status of women in Goa. During the 450 years of their rule a number of legislations were passed concerning the Goan women. Several of these laws were enlightening ones and some of them were enacted to prevent gender discrimination. The position which the Christian women enjoyed was in fact a matter for envy for non-Christian women. Even the Hindu reformists in the later years became fervent advocates to criticize the disparaged position of the Hindu women. The Hindu women especially from the New Conquests were for long time governed by their Code of Customs and usages. However, by the end of the nineteenth century they were permitted not to follow their Hindu Law and seek justice under Portuguese law.

The Portuguese did not look down upon women as much as the Hindus did. They introduced reforms to do away with some evils practices existing in the society, such as sati, child-marriages, tonsuring, of widows and polygamy.
Legal change:

Sati was abolished soon after the conquest of Goa. The legislation against sati was the first one issued in the history of women in Goa. Afonso de Albuquerque abolished the practice of sati which probably appeared barbaric to him. Tonsuring of the widows was also banned during the initial period of Portuguese rule, however, non-Christian women in Goa continued with the practice until last few decades of the colonial rule. A few women took advantage of the law that permitted widow remarriages. Since the prejudice against the widow was so deeply-rooted in the society, therefore, the legislation had no effect. In addition, few men came forward to marry them due to the stigma attached to widows by the customs and traditions. It was difficult to arrange husbands for widows.

Another evil practice in the Goan society was polygamy. It was prohibited in 1567, despite of the prohibition, the practice continued. Hindu men were allowed by their Code of Customs and usages, to have more than one wife. Since the state did not succeed in abolishing polygamy, it tried to suppress the practice. Normally, the first wives refused to give this permission and was often pressurized to obtain the same.

While a non-christian man could not even opt out of an undesirable marriage until 1910. When the constitutional changes took place in Portugal. There were double standards in this regard.
There are instances when apparently conversion was the motive behind some of measures, which were designed to favour that promotion of Christianity. This was true in the earlier centuries of the Portuguese rule economic incentives were provided to persuade women to convert to Christianity, for example grant of property rights. In the early years, Hindu widows and orphans were not entitled to property of their dead husbands and fathers, unless they were converted to Christianity. Conversion to Christianity broke the traditional and customary shackles that bound the Indian women. The Portuguese Civil Code, 1867 brought further benefits to women in Portuguese India. The Code is still in force, in Goa, even though it has been replaced in Portugal in 1967. The Portuguese Civil Code introduced several changes concerning laws on marriage, divorce and protection to children, including the one that guaranteed equality of sexes in respect of inheritance of property. On the death of the head of the family automatically one half of his property would go to the wife and the remaining half of the property was divided equally among his children irrespective of sex. In the rest of India daughters had no right to the family property until 1956, except to Streedhan. Streedhan consisted of dowry in the form of jewellery and personal possession which was given to a daughter at the time of her marriage.

As mentioned earlier, in chapter one, although daughters were granted property rights by law, fathers and brothers found ways and means to deny married daughters and sisters of their rights, on the grounds that they were given dowry at the time of marriage. This was done to avoid divisions of the family property. Infact, dowry in
cash given by the upper class Goan families to their daughters at the time of marriage, was a kind of advance to what they were actually entitled on the death of their parents. Girls at the time of marriage were asked to sign *disistência* (surrender) on the grounds that they were given dowry. By law *disistência* was valid only if it was given after the death of the father and not earlier. At times, daughters were given much less than what they were entitled to them by law. Among the upper classes it was a tradition to keep some daughters unmarried at home, so that the family property remained undivided for the son.

Wealthy families also sometimes found ways of depriving their daughters-in-law of the family property by making them sign a pre-nuptial contract whereby they agreed to forgo their claim to half of the property of the husband. The motive was to keep the wealth within the family of the husband.

The code raised the age of marriage for girls and boys. This was an important measure to end child marriages prevalent in the Goan society of the time. However, early marriages continued in Goa until the twentieth century. Actually, some backward classes such as; *kunbis*, potters and scavengers were getting their daughters married at the age of 12 years and sons at 14 years of age, according to the law of 1928.

The constitutional changes of 1910 in Portugal resulted in further benefits for women. Divorce was permitted for the first time to the inhabitants of Portugal and her colonies. Women had now the right to terminate an undesirable marriage. The number
of women who availed themselves of this law was very small. Socio-religious ban prevented women from restoring to divorce. In those days, women in Portuguese Goa were not economically independent. Majority of women, being illiterate were not aware of the legislation. Even at present, most women whether they are literate or illiterate prefer to endure rather than give up an uncongenial marriage because of social stigma attached to divorce.

Legally, the position of women during the colonial period was considerably upgraded. Despite issuing of the significant reforms in order to improve the conditions of women it has been clearly noted from the historical records of the time that in practice women did not avail themselves of these laws. Socio-religious factors prevented women from taking advantage of the legislation introduced by the government. At other times the laws enacted by the state were not effectively enforced. The colonial government seem to have been reluctant to impose strict measures against some customs in their colonies, perhaps it did not want to offend the feelings of the inhabitants, provoke resentment or even revolt as for examples, in the case of widow remarriage and sati. For instance, in mid sixteenth century, the ban on sati was temporarily lifted by the state as a result of petitions and pressures from the people. But it was reinforced again but not rigidly until 1884.

The state was not successful in its attempts to ban the activities of the prostitutes and bailadeiras. As in the case of other reforms, measures against the prostitutes were
not strictly executed. The authorities were accused of not minding their activities and even of associating with them.

Majority of the women were not formally educated. The education of women was neglected. The attitude of government and society in general were responsible for this state of affairs. It appears that, it did not suit a patriarchal society of the time to provide education for women. Women were not expected to work in the milieu of men. A woman's only purpose in life was the bearing and rearing of children. Education was made available for women only during the last 60 years of the Portuguese rule in Goa.

Education benefited a small section of women, mainly from the Old Conquests. (i.e Tiswadi, Bardez and Salcete). Education of women in the New Conquests (i.e Pernem, Bicholim, Satari, Ponda, Quepem, Sanguem and Canacona) which were predominantly non-christian, was completely neglected.

At times many parents influenced by the customs and traditions refused to send their daughters to school. Some girls of upper strata were provided education at home with the help of tutors.

In the early decades of the twentieth century the society was made aware through the media and other agencies about the need to educate women. Lack of education affected women's self development; culture and upbringing of the children.
Change in economic conditions:

During the last 50 years of the Portuguese rule, there were women who distinguished themselves in the field of nursing, teaching creative writing, music and politics. Many of them have shown extraordinary courage and ability in bringing up their children single handed, in case of the death of the husband or his absence from the native place, particularly Goa poor economic conditions compelled many poor and middle class men to migrate in large numbers from the end of the 19th century. They left their original home every year for better prospects to British India and Africa. Majority of the wives stayed back and did not accompany their husbands in far away places. They stayed back to care for the old in-laws and raise their children. Those few who accompanied their husbands to Africa and other places, returned to their own country when the children were big enough to go to school. Thus provided them with formal western education.

In an ordinary colonial household, there was a division of work. The men undertook repair of the house, while the wife cooked food, performed several household chores and some even helped the husbands in agricultural work. In the absence of the husband who have migrated in order to earn the livelihood, the wife was over burdened with work.

However, the women had the authority over the family and that enabled her to take minor decisions in the absence of the husband.
In the last forty years the women have migrated to many parts of the globe. Some to accompany their husbands, while others on their own for further studies. A large number of the women have migrated to the Middle East for better prospects. Women who migrate, continue to be predominantly of lower strata of the society who work there as domestic servants. Women of middle and higher rank have also started migrating to these countries to be with their husbands. Many of them in course of time have taken jobs.

Goan women migrated to raise their standard of living as well as of their families. These women contribute towards the economy of Goa. In the Middle Eastern countries women often undergo great hardships and are exploited by their masters. Female emigration especially emigration of married women, has had its impact on the family. The emigration has separated the children from the parents. This has caused great damage to the lives of the children due to the lack of basic family training. The children experienced the lack of love, in order to satisfy their basic needs they go astray, leading licentious life away from home.

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.
In addition to these characteristics, it cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is *parental love*, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life: as well as being a source, the parents’ love is also the *animating principle* and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs.

The educated section of women in Portuguese India enjoyed hitherto undreamed economic independence. Although women are as highly qualified as men and many times have done better than men in the educational field, yet very few women occupy important posts in the government, educational institutions, industrial fields, etc.

**Empowerment of women:**

Majority of the men resent women in higher positions. They resent assertive women with a mind of their own. Women were increasingly functioning as decision makers. Slowly yet emphatically a new class of “working women” was emerging. Women were steadily going through a power metamorphosis, a change in all sectors including the religious. Convenient scriptural interpretation of women’s subservient position was also being questioned by the awakened women who proposed the
feminist theology. These religious women did not stop at ascertaining their identity and position alone, but organized their marginalized counterpart.

Working women, not only supplement family income; but shoulder domestic responsibility in disproportionate extent when women are given power - it is certain that there will be a total transformation towards full humanization and it will be a powerful means towards social and spiritual change.

Women’s awakening is as significant for the Church as is men’s awakening. No sector of the Church can afford to be asleep, indifferent, inactive or marginal. There is much Gospel work for the Church to do; many people to look after; several problems to study and solve; numerous situations to evaluate and redesign; great sufferings to share in tender compassion’ much oppression to criticize and overthrow and many movements for human rights, freedom and solidarity with which to collaborate. Who else can understand women better than women themselves? Congregations of nuns have played an important role in empowering women through education. Contemporary Goa is a canvas of hope painted in colours of excellence, enterprise, hard work, and social commitment by empowered women. The magic potion of empowerment through education has benefited most, cutting through cast, creed, and religion. There is no sphere of activity that is forbidden for a woman. Today’s woman has earned for herself a position of envy, equity, and dignity; and is contributing meaningfully to the overall development of the state.
Women are awaking up to their human and Christian dignity and rights. Their empowerment is not their work, nor men's work; nor of the Church. Women and men and the Church as a whole, have to wake up afresh to the way of God has empowered women, along with men, from the beginning. One of the fundamental truths of Faith, highlighted in the very opening chapters of the Bible, affirms that God made the 'human' in God's own image and likeness, as God's ambassador and viceroy to God's own world. This human image of God was created male and female, man and woman, each being equally god's representative, or both together. Women's awakening today challenges the Church and helps her resist every temptation to ignore, bypass this clear revelation, this faith affirmation of the God given equality of women and men.

Women have woken up and become vocal. They speak up for their rights in the church; they propose feminist interpretation of scripture and tradition; they do theology from perspectives specifically their own; they are investigating the history of women's role in the pre-Constantinian Church, and the significant contribution women have made to church's life and services.

There are many Congregations of religious women which have rendered distinguished service to women in particular and the nation in general. Appendix V

Women religious today are in a process of experiencing a new and collective consciousness of what it means to be truly human and equal partners in the Church and society at large. To be conscious and to empower the other, they should know their power to create, nurture and transform. These courageous and dedicated women
have lighted the torch of learning for girls in every corner of India and thus empowered them through education.

Education has made women conscious of their rights. The literacy rate in Goa i.e. Portuguese India is quite high. Having taken advantage of equal education women today want to demonstrate their caliber. They have made progress in many fields. Spheres of activity are widening, most especially for women who live in urban areas. Women in urban areas in Goa are slowly making inroads. They are making claims in decision-making. Women are beginning to get organized. At present women are in many professions including medicine, engineering, teaching, business, management, politics and defence forces.

The six women whose life have been chosen to portray a transition from the 'ignored' to 'empowered' amply demonstrate the societal psyche of the bygone days of colonial rule' and most of all the treacherous design of side lining the women and how colonial reforms triggered improvement in women's status to make her a self reliant empowered women of modern Goa. The author ascribes a role of great importance to religious institutions/church in catalyzing these social reforms and facilitating their manifestations into women empowerment. These women have not been inhibited by the legacy of the historical past and have shown an extraordinary resilience in the face of social odds to carve a niche for themselves. Most impressively their efforts have not merely culminated at self-empowerment, but rather continue incessantly at initiating the oppressed into the empowered state.