CHAPTER VI

IN SEARCH OF A NEW FORMATIVE PROGRAMME

6.0. Introduction

In the second, third and fourth chapters, we analysed the present day formation programme with the help of the already published literature and the qualitative and quantitative surveys we conducted among the sisters at the grass-root level. In the fifth chapter we saw the models and visions regarding the formation in the sources of Christian traditions namely Bible, Magisterium and founders of the Congregations. If we compare the result of these four chapters we will realize that the present day formation is not sufficient to equip the formees to engage in social issues once they are placed in the pastoral field. It prepares the formees either to live inside the convents or to run the institutes of various activities managed by the Congregations. They cling to the safe atmosphere within the institutions. They don’t like to quit the safer zones of the campuses to engage in the service of the marginalized. The study and analyses we made in the previous chapters give rise to the urgent need of attitudinal change in the formees during the important stages of formation such as Novitiate and Tertiarieship.

As we have observed earlier many studies have been conducted from the various aspects of the formation of a person called to religious life. But no concrete research work is so far done regarding the formation of women religious to deal with the abandoned, or the most marginalized women flock of Kerala, except some short articles. The goal of this chapter is to develop a formative programme which will equip the sisters to engage in fighting against the social evils and supporting the abandoned women and thus raise them up from their
cursed situations to live with human dignity. It includes the expectations to be fulfilled in formulating a new formative programme, the new proposals, the distracting aspects, the theological and Biblical basis for the proposals, a model formative programme, practical suggestions and remarks. The order of the respondents referred is seen in the bracket.

Aleyamma Vijayan in one of her presentations entitled as “Towards an alternative paradigm of Justice: Voices from the other half – The Indian scenario”, at the conference of major superiors of religious Congregations of priests, sisters and brothers on 28th January 2006 at Renewal Centre, Kaloor, Ernakulam, said: “In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India, in terms of rapes, assaults and dowry-related murders. Violence against women, ranging from the visible to the invisible – from battery to sexual atrocities like molestation and rape, dowry tortures, murders and other forms of marital violence, trafficking and female infanticide – continues to be perpetrated by families, communities and the State. In India the number of crimes against women has almost doubled between 1990 and 2000. Every 26 minutes a woman is molested. Every 34 minutes a rape takes place. Every 42 minutes a sexual harassment incident occurs. Every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped. And every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death over dowry. One-quarter of the reported rapes involve girls under the age of 16 but the vast majority are never reported. Although the penalty is severe, convictions are rare. Caste and communal prejudice increasingly discriminates against women and makes them the target of sexual violence”107. The above data urges the need of women religious to commit for the cause of these insecure women.

6.1. Expectations and Proposals

6.1.1. Expectations

Though women are included in the so called marginalized group in the society, women religious get considerably good respect in Kerala because of their activities in various fields like teaching, health care and social works. And the society which considers religious as the esteemed persons expects from them equal sense of commitment towards the society. The following comments reveal the aspirations of the interviewed persons.

After five to ten years of religious formation, the women religious must be in a position to know the society at large and the fellow women in particular because they were formed in the mind of Jesus Christ. They must have cultivated the ability to respond to the social issues as Jesus did. They are expected to be available to the people through house visits and support them morally, socially and spiritually in resolving their issues [No. 6]. Being the group of privileged women, they should have the ability to stand for the under privileged, abused and abandoned women [No. 7]. In the formation period they have to foster the conviction that they are consecrated for others. The spirit they imbibed during formation is to be continued later. In this regard the way of life in religious institutes must help the individual members to be conducive to live the spirit of service for the oppressed [No.16].

The sisters who participated in the survey opine that the formators have a great role to play in this regard. It makes imperative the presence of experienced formators whose lives are examples to be imitated by the formees [No.13]. During formation all the prejudices regarding the different marginalized groups in the society must be ruled out and the formees must undergo an attitudinal change so as to get enabled to dedicate themselves for the service of the poor and needy [No.18]. This necessitates sisters acquiring knowledge regarding the legal aspects in dealing with the problems of marginalized women [No.20],
and practical experience to work among the victims of social evils and abused persons [No. 28].

6.1.2. Distracting Aspects

The sisters who spoke frankly about their expectations regarding formation were equally aware of the problems and blocks on the path of formation. Deficiency in formation is not the only reason that prevents sisters from working for the oppressed. Cultural bias against religion is also another factor to be studied. Generally people think that the duty of religious is limited to the realms of prayer and service inside the campuses. The lack of support from the common people discourage when some religious engage in the public sphere. This social stigma is to be removed through conscientization [No.2].

Another negative influence on the sisters is lack of support from the community. Sisters are becoming indifferent towards the problems of suffering women also because their creative mentality is suppressed by the superiors and the rules and regulations prevailing in the communities. There is hardly any respect for the social activists within the Congregation. Leading liberative forms of service is not seen as a constitutive element of religious life. [No.3]. Fear of being isolated in the community and society, the sisters wants to hold on the traditional line. Besides this discouraging factor, there is the lack of the sacrificial mentality of sister. Sisters are unable to understand the agony of the marginalized women as they are very much concerned to safe guard their good name and safety [No.16].

6.1.3. General Proposals for formation

The first and foremost proposal for a solution is attitudinal change. Attitudes are dispositions expressing a state of readiness to respond. It is organised through experience, and exerting a
directive or dynamic influence on behaviour\(^{108}\). From the heredity, life situations, education, and family background, a certain kind of perspectives influence a person. While one ponders over these elements certain attitudes germinate in the persons. The candidates enter the religious houses with such preconceived negative attitudes against the abused marginalized women. This pejorative preconception is to be changed as the outcome of the formation programme. The formees may be helped to cultivate an attitude of respect and love towards the victims of social abuse, which will inspire them to commit their lives to their well being.

Attitudinal change cannot be brought in without giving right convictions through theoretical stands. Therefore during the important stages of formation, such as Novitiate and Tertianship, theoretical classes may be given to the formees regarding the life and issues of the marginalized abandoned women. They must be given concrete knowledge about what happens to these women. This theoretical and practical knowledge will be effective only through exposure programmes and practical sessions. The candidates may be taken to the places and to the victims so that they may feel with them and get motivated to respond and to stand with them. The situations of distress, pain, isolation and abandonment of victims of abuse have to be internalized also by the sisters in formation. Further, through counselling and spiritual direction, formees can be helped to heal the inner self from all their wounds, weaknesses and personal problems and to attain maturity needed to face social issues.

The formation is not a finished project. It has to be continued throughout life. The formees and professed religious should continue their self-education, by reading periodicals and books in their field of apostolate. They should be given opportunity to take appropriate courses even after their terminal degree. Following the media not merely the print media but also visual and social media will make them updated in the service of God and people.

The milieu in which the candidates are formed is as important as the content of the formation. To have an effective formation the formees should be given their course work in connection with their peers in the secular world. Tertians may be given chances to have their training in co-educational campuses which will help them to deal with secular people, to compete with them and to have personal relationship with them. This would be an initiation for the formees to take risk and to get involved in the life of the poor and underprivileged. Novitiates should invite professional lay men and women with whom they can have on-going dialogue on the problems confronted by the unorganized sections of people.

6.1.4. Proposals for novitiate and tertianship

Novitiate is the period in which the candidates follow intra-Congregational studies. Along with the inputs regarding prayer life, one must give them the awareness that the religious call is to be sent to the world with His mission. Serving the society is an obligation by the very fact of consecration in the church. At this juncture it is worth remembering the words of T. Amalan, “We need to help them find God in this broken soul which is their life and from this discovery they will be able to go forth and meet the poor as their own brothers and sisters”. This type of convictions can be deepened by meditating the Scriptures and reading the signs of the time, with the sense of responsibility towards the society and with compassion to the victims. By strengthening the prayer life, they can accept and respect the right of all citizens to live diligently. The inevitable link between spiritual life and work for justice is emphasized by the Vatican II: “Undoubtedly not all men are alike as regards physical capacity and intellectual and moral powers. But forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design. It is regrettable

that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere"\textsuperscript{110}. Superiors must discern the radical thinking and enthusiasm of young sisters, give them the awareness of the legal aspects of dealing with the problems of the marginalized ladies and the opportunities to work in the field of empowering the women in distress.

6.1.5. Proposal to overcome the indifference

The sisters who are indifferent to the victims because of their comfort seeking attitude, seeking security, and getting no encouragement from the communities, have to be given a special spiritual training. Amedo Cencini has to say the following in this regard: “The human person is a conscious and free being and is called to grow in consciousness that will bring him/her to be master of himself/herself and also in freedom, which will open up into responsibility; is called to live the interpersonal relationship as a place of self-fulfilment for what one receives and gives to others; is capable of transcendence to the point of opening up oneself to the divine, feeling loved by it and loving it”\textsuperscript{111}. Only a deep personal relationship with the Lord will free oneself from the false self. Psychological methods also could assist in this matter. In the second year novitiate they could be given chances to do short duration projects on the life and experience of women in the locality and help the women through their fasting and sacrificial life.

A Tertianship takes place normally just before the perpetual vows. At this stage they are better disposed to experience based training programmes. Therefore it is good to arrange exposure programmes to the sisters of this category. In order to have personal encounter with the victims and motivate them to be empathetic towards them. The opinion of James J. Gill, affirms the use of exposure activities. “Empathy also serves as a preliminary step towards

\textsuperscript{110} Gaudium et Spes 29
showing love in deeds. If, for example, I focus my thoughts and imagination on the experiences of people who have just lived through a devastating earthquake, war, fire, or disease, and if I vividly picture to myself how they are thinking and feeling and what their yearnings and most pressing needs are, there is a high probability that I will respond to their plight with actions that will be spontaneous, generous, and proportioned to their wants and needs. But if I am the kind of person, who in my habitual way of thinking, measures the catastrophes and crises affecting other people’s lives in terms of numbers and theories instead of feelings and needs – in other words, if I think abstractly rather than in concrete, stark detail about what these victims are undergoing – this unempathetic response will fail to move me into caring-giving action.\(^{112}\)

Another important area to be stressed at the tertianship for the empowerment of sisters is to help them to live out the charism of their respective Congregations according to the context. Such a formation will help them to empower the victims of abuse by accepting and listening to them without judging. The words of Pope Francis, that the church needs to meet people where they are, invites pastors to avoid judgements over the victims which do not take into account the complexity of various situations.\(^{113}\)

During Tertianship the sisters could be given chances to take up major projects in the areas like slums or villages and do practical implementation of the result of the project within a short duration.

When the traditional structure and rules in the religious Congregation distracts some sisters from engaging into the social issues, they must remember the words of Pope Francis, ‘each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the

\(^{113}\) Francis (2016). *Amoris Laetitia* 296
‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel. The sisters who are unable to see Jesus in the suffering women in distress are those who have no deep personalised spirituality; they simply say prayers, and to overcome this challenge, they must be trained to connect prayer life with serving the poor. When they stand for the cause of the abandoned, they serve Jesus and so that too is a prayer.

6.2. Biblical and Theological basis

6.2.1. Biblical Basis

Here we search for the Biblical basis for the proposals that will bring attitudinal change in formees during formation. In the New Testament, there are a number of occasions where Jesus and the disciples were engaged in social issues. In the Jewish tradition, persons with unclean spirit, lepers, paralytic, blind, women, widows etc. were marginalized, abandoned and rejected by the society. The attitude of Jesus towards these suffering groups was positive. Jesus was compassionate to them and considered them as God’s children. Jesus gave them all, life, light and freedom. We will see them a little more closely.

In Mk.1.21-28, we see Jesus encountering the man with unclean spirit. Jesus heals him even before he asks. In Mk. 9.14-28, a man pleads for the cure of his son, and Jesus heals the boy. In Mk.5.1-13, Jesus heals the demoniac by sending out a number of unclean spirits from him. In all the three cases, Jesus brought them to the normal state enabling them to live in the society. Again, in Mk.5.21-43, Jesus restores a girl to life by giving her a complete cure. The woman was considered unclean and so was keeping herself away from the society. Jesus acknowledges her faith and brings her back to the society. In Mk.7.24-30, Jesus frees a gentile girl, from the clutches of a demon. In Mk.2.1-12 Jesus heals a paralytic and gives him

\footnote{Pope Francis(2013). \textit{Evangelii Gaudium} 20}
the strength to walk and move out to help others. All these incidents point to the fact: his salvation act is universal, not limited to one group alone.

In Mk.14.2-9, we see a woman anointing Jesus with the ointment poured on his head. Jesus could see her intentions and recognized positively her action. In Matt.15.21-28, Jesus appreciates the faith of a Canaanite woman and gives instant healing to her daughter. In Lk.7.11-17, Jesus feels compassion on a Widow at Naim and gives life to her dead son. In Lk. 8.1-3, there is reference to some women accompanying Jesus in His saving journey. Jesus considered women with esteem and gave them respectable role in His salvation ministry. In Lk.10.38-42, Jesus visits the house of two women namely Martha and Mary, encourages their endeavours and appreciates their service. By visiting them Jesus gives them life and strength and upholds their position in the society. In Lk.13.10-27, Jesus frees a crippled woman from her infirmity and heals her on a Sabbath day. Thus He gives importance to women more than rules and regulations in the community and society in which he lived. It is in this background we have to understand Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene after resurrection even before appearing to disciples.

The best example of Jesus that would help the formees to bring in an attitudinal change would be His encounter with the women caught in adultery. A woman and Jesus meet. She is an adulteress and, in the eyes of the Law, liable to be stoned. Jesus, through his preaching and the total gift of himself that would lead him to the Cross, returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent. Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God’s love must take primacy over all else. This Gospel account, however, is not an encounter of sin and judgement in the abstract, but of a sinner and her Saviour. Jesus looked that woman in the eye and read in her heart a desire to be understood, forgiven and set free. The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. Jesus’ only judgement is one filled
with mercy and compassion for the condition of this sinner. To those who wished to judge and condemn her to death, Jesus replies with a lengthy silence. His purpose was to let God’s voice be heard in the conscience not only of the woman, but also in those of her accusers, who drop their stones and one by one leave the scene (cf. Jn 8:9). Jesus then says: “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go your way and from now on do not sin again” (vv. 10-11). Jesus helps the woman to look to the future with hope and to make a new start in life. Henceforth, if she so desires, she can “walk in charity” (Eph 5:2). Once clothed in mercy, even if the inclination to sin remains, it is overcome by the love that makes it possible for her to look ahead and to live her life differently.  

6.2.2. Theological basis

Consecration and mission are two faces of a single coin. Vatican Council II says, through a special consecration, intimately rooted in baptism and effected by the profession of evangelical counsels we intend to free ourselves from the obstacles which might draw us away from the fervour of charity and the perfect worship of God and to give ourselves completely to the divine service. After having encountered Christ and experienced his compassionate love, consecrated men and women are called to follow him with a passionate love and to share in his passionate love for humanity. Passion for Christ and passion for humanity are two sides of the coin that is religious life.

Amedeo Cencini says, “The mystery of being human and having respect for that same mystery demand a special attitude on the level of disposition and the type of help a formator offers in confronting the one who is living through a crisis in religious life or priesthood. What is required, for example, is a listening stance that is willing to perceive the root of the difficulties and the real objective of the question (often unknown to the individual), an

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115 Francis(2016 Nov 20th), Misericordia Et Misera 1.
116 Lumen Gentium 44
enlightened good will that conveys to the brother or sister that attitude of welcoming that invites opening up; a competency that can identify at what phase of development "something" is blocked; a capacity for relationship and human warmth that helps to heal certain wounds and untie certain knots; a spiritual wisdom that succeeds in discerning the long path toward the will of the Father; a ministry of fraternal assistance that helps to rediscover and live the mystery.\textsuperscript{117}

Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular institute teaches us that for each religious, formation is the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ, growing in union with and in configuration to him. It is a matter of taking on increasingly the mind of Christ, of sharing more deeply his gift of himself to the Father and his brotherly service of the human family, and of doing this according to the founding gift which mediates the Gospel to the members of a given religious institute. Such a process requires a genuine conversion. "Putting on Jesus Christ" (cf. \textit{Rm} 13:14, \textit{Gal} 3:27, \textit{Eph} 4:24) implies the stripping off of selfishness and egoism (cf. \textit{Eph} 4:22-24, \textit{Col} 3:9-10). The very fact of "walking henceforth according to the Spirit" means giving up "the desires of the flesh" (\textit{Gal} 5:16). The religious professes to make this putting on of Christ, in his poverty, his love, and his obedience, the essential pursuit of life. It is a pursuit which never ends. There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also to those which contribute psychologically, culturally, and socially to the fullness of the human personality.\textsuperscript{118}

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life reminds that the Second Vatican Council has set forth the aims and means for every true education in the service of the human family. It is important to keep these in mind in the reception and formation of candidates for religious life, since the first requirement for this formation is the

\textsuperscript{117}Amedeo Cencini, Formation Today, Comment on the Apostolic exhortation Pottissimn Institutioni, 2.3.

\textsuperscript{118}Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes(1983, May 31\textsuperscript{st}). Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life as applied to institutes dedicated to works of the Apostolate 45.
ability to identify a human and Christian foundation with a particular person. Numerous failures in religious life can, in effect, be attributed to defects that were not perceived, or overcome, in this area. Not only should the existence of this human and Christian foundation be verified in one who is entering religious life, but it is necessary to assure that effective adjustments are made all during the period of formation, according to the evolution of the individuals and events.\textsuperscript{119}

The Congregation for Religious and Secular institutes says, present social conditions, on the other hand, require new forms of solidarity and involvement. Changes taking place in some areas in the civil sphere are beginning to develop responsibility on all levels of society through structures and means of participation. Thus, everyone is called to take an active role in solving problems relating to the building of the social order. Side by side with the contribution of the laity, the witness and experience of religious can make an important contribution in this field towards solutions which are in line with the criteria of the Gospel and the pastoral directives of the Magisterium (27).\textsuperscript{120}

In Vita Consecrata, Pope St. John Paul II says, “Formation should have a profound effect on individuals, so that their very attitude and action, at important moments as well as in ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God. Formation is a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father. . Since the very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self giving, this must also be the principal objective of formation.”\textsuperscript{121}

Pope Francis spoke of commitment to poor as the duty of the Holy Church, which is the duty of each Christian very, specially that of every women religious, “Our objective is to

\textsuperscript{119} Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (1990, Feb 2\textsuperscript{nd}). Directives of Formation in Religious Institutes 33.
\textsuperscript{120} Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes (1978, April 25-28), Religious and Human Promotion (e).
\textsuperscript{121} John Paul II (1996), Vita Consecrata 67
listen to needs, desires, disappointments, desperations, hopes. We must restore hope to the young, help the old, open up to the future and spread love. To be poor among the poor. We must include the excluded and preach peace”122.

Again we get support from the words of Pope Francis who says, “If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, those who cannot repay you” (Lk 14:14)”123.

Kathleen Coyle says, “In Jewish society, which was structured around the purity system, holiness meant separation from everyone and everything unclean. Jesus was brought up on this religion, yet in his mission statement he says: I have come to seek out and save the lost [Lk. 19:10], and he offers us an extraordinary makim quoted above: “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful”[Lk.6:36]. Holiness for Jesus means compassion, to feel as God feels; he is the embodiment of the compassion of God. We too, having been nourished by the divine energy can reach out and translate the divine energy within us into compassion for those to whom we minister.”124

All the above references from the Church documents and the writings of experts in formation lay a solid foundation for the need of articulating prayer life and liberative works and reiterate the necessity of bringing an attitudinal change in the formees towards the abandoned women.

6.3. Concrete Project of Formation

In the light of problems encountered in formation and the expectations highlighted in our study, our remaining task is to outline an effective programme of formation for the religious in order that the latter assimilates commitment to the abandoned and neglected women. We see formation as a dynamic process by means of which individuals are converted to the Word of God in the depths of their being and at the same time, learn how to discover the signs of God in earthly realities\(^{125}\).

6.3.1. The Objectives

- To initiate the formees into continuous search for deeper self knowledge, broad faith vision and world vision, widening convictions, confidence and courage in an atmosphere of freedom.
- To make them grow in intense love for Christ and his mission for the downtrodden and rejected of the society mainly women flock.
- To discern the personal charism of each sister and make them deep-rooted in the charism and spirit of the Congregation and its apostolate.
- To teach them how to lead the actual day-to-day living of religious life in the post modern era.
- To equip them with in-depth knowledge in various sources of Catholic theology, spirituality, social teachings, psychological and moral life, and inter religious dialogue.
- To develop in the formees the abilities and aptitudes to interact freely with people having decencies and empower them.
- To make the candidates grow in self-possession, self-governance and self-gift.

6.3.2. Means for formation

- Presenting Christ in the Gospels and the activities of the apostles and the first Christians as the models for a dedicated life.
- Providing with adequate physical, intellectual psychological, spiritual, social, moral, ecclesial and experiential knowledge to live a committed life and to work in the context.
- Introducing the life and teachings of the founding fathers/mothers of each Congregation, and their specific charism.
- Giving both theoretical and practical knowledge about gender equality and facilitate gender sensitive formation.
- Arranging exposure programmes to get firsthand knowledge of the suffering flock.
- Cultivating positive attitudes towards the marginalized women through positive thinking.

6.3.3. Stages of Formation

(i) Candidacy: This is the time of the first experience, “come and see” [Jn. 1:39], which prepares a candidate to be initiated to religious life by the effective availability to break away certain habits of her past and adapt a new style for mature vocational attitude.

(ii) Pre-novitiate: This is a period of immediate preparation for the novitiate. Here the formees are trained in natural virtues. The candidates are helped to discern their vocation freely and helped to grow in motivation and the sense of commitment. She is prepared well for a fully responsible choice of the religious life.

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126 CTC, (2014) Constitutions & Directives. 33
127 Ibid 34
(iii) **Novitiate:** The principal purpose of the novitiate is to give the novices a greater understanding of their divine vocation. During the novitiate, they are to be helped to form their minds and hearts in the spirit of the Congregation.

(iv) **Juniorate:** Juniorate is a period between first profession and perpetual vows for bringing to perfection the religious and apostolic doctrinal and technical formation. During this period the junior sister prepares herself in a suitable way by acquiring necessary competence to undertake the various activities of the Congregation.

**Tertiarianship:** The period of a few months before perpetual vows are of intense preparation and is called Tertiarianship. The junior sister prepares herself for her lifelong dedication. Many practical sessions and theoretical inputs equip the Tertians to effectively dedicate their lives for the service of God and people.

(v) **Ongoing formation:** Formation is for life-transformation and it is a lifelong process till the last breath of our life. Each person is called to grow until he / she become fully mature with the fullness of Christ [Eph. 4; 13]. Ongoing formation is an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration for conforming oneself more closely to Christ.  

6.3.4 Formation Process

**Human formation:** The objective of human formation is to provide the resources for the candidate to come to deeper selfknowledge about her natural, psychological, moral and human capacities including areas of life that need healing. Physical and psychological testings, self-awareness programmes, preparation of personality profile, etc. will help the candidate to be true to herself and to the committed life.

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128 CTC (2014) Constitutions & Directives, 91, 44
Intellectual and experiential formation: This formation is intended to impart sufficient knowledge in the areas of theology, scripture, spirituality, religion, psychology and in interpersonal relationships.

Spiritual formation: It consists in maturing the formees spiritually through regular accompaniment of a Spiritual Director who is spiritually and psychologically healthy and sound. He/she can instill in the candidates the spirit of the Congregation and the spirit of a dedicated life in the church for the service of the society.

Social formation: The social circumstances, the culture, the economical and financial status, religiosity, morality, educational status etc., of the people where the sisters are intending to serve is introduced in the formation periods. Practical knowledge is also given through regular exposure programmes. Formators try to convince the formees that their first and foremost duty is to be one with the underprivileged and abandoned women of their area. In this regard it will be good to include a project in the syllabus to study the life of the socially abandoned women and to help them in all the possible realms.

Congregational formation: Formation in a community teaches the candidates how to live the life specific to the Congregation, the charism and the spirit of the founder or foundress. At this stage the formee will learn also to incorporate the personal charism with that of Congregation, and to establish mature relationships with the sisters. In a community of mature adults the candidates study to live with freedom and responsibility. An atmosphere of confidence is to be kept where the candidate feels to open up themselves and get healed of all their inner wounds and be efficient to work.

Gender sensitive formation: Effective input sessions regarding the equality of men and women from the very fact of created in the very image and likeness of God the Father is to be stressed in various stages the formation. The peculiar characteristics of both the genders are to be taught. The girls must grow with self esteem in being a female human being.
**Formators:** Along with the qualities set by the Congregation, a formator must be a person with maturity and social consciousness. The formator must have credible knowledge to deal with the problems and issues related to the abused and abandoned women in the society.

**Spiritual Direction:** Loving accompaniment of a soul in spiritual journey is a noble task. Spiritual director or a soul friend is an urgent need for all very specially those who are on the way to spiritual perfection. Spiritual directors are instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit who is the principal guide.

**6.3.5. Practical Suggestions**

The formees should be given deeper knowledge and awareness of the present world and the issues related to it. Modern medias can be used for training. Training for a servant oriented life-style is to be stressed, since Jesus came to serve and not to be served. A certain amount of patriarchal style should be reduced in order to keep a creative atmosphere in the communities.

The prime importance should be given to establish personal relationship with Jesus and the fellow beings who are created in His own image and likeness. Through frequent dialogue with the candidates try to understand their personhood and allow them to blossom in an atmosphere of freedom and acceptance.

Present Jesus through life examples and activities of formators and the suffering people in the society. The awareness about the presence of Jesus should encourage the formees to take up any amount of suffering, pain and hard work in his name.

Experiential knowledge about God, truth, beauty, sacrificial love, goodness etc., should be given. Give chances to the candidates to be creative in the existing situation and to be content with their giftedness in the community. Give opportunities to pray with the people, involve in their daily problems and develop empathy towards the poor and the suffering.
Give awareness of the individualities and potentialities of being women. Person oriented formation is to be given. The candidates should be freed from all prejudices. Role models who lead challenging lives are to be given more participation in formation so that the candidates commit more for the cause of the socially abandoned and abused women.

Before concluding we will deal with two more aspects that may strengthen and enrich the new project of formation outlined above. One is to clarify the doubt whether the victims-oriented formation will be at the expense of the spiritual aspect of religious life. And the other is to reflect on the indigenous aspect of formation. Put in other words, we make an attempt to incorporate the good elements from the Indian culture into the project of formation.

6.4. Is Contemplation against commitment to the world?

We develop an answer to this question referring to documents of Church. The document of Vatican Council II says, the role played in evangelization by religious men and women consecrated to prayer, silence, penance and sacrifice is particularly effective in witness and in apostolic fruitfulness. Indeed, the contemplative dimension inherent in every form of religious life is especially strong in them. The contemplative dimension, then, shows that religious life in all its forms not only does not alienate religious from other human beings and make them useless for human society but, on the contrary, permits them to be present to their brothers and sisters in a deeper way in the charity of Christ.

To establish the kingdom of God within the very structures of the world, insofar as this constitutes evangelical promotion in human history, is certainly a theme of great interest for the whole Christian community, and therefore for religious also; but not in the sense that they allow themselves to become involved directly in politics. Through their scholastic institutes,

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the communications media, and multiple religious and educational projects, they can actively contribute especially to the formation of the young, thus making them architects of human and social development. The repercussions of this apostolate will not fail to be felt in the political sphere also. This is not through a strategy of conquest but through that service to human society which is the mission mandated by Christ to the whole ecclesial community (Lk 22:25-27). It is from this point of view that the efforts of women religious to cooperate in the advancement of women are to be encouraged, so that women may succeed in being involved in those areas of public and ecclesial life which best correspond with their particular nature and the qualities that are proper to them\textsuperscript{130}.

As per the teachings of the Church documents, Religious, because of the radicality of their evangelical options, feel more profoundly challenged. They know that, in the measure they themselves are converted to God's original plan for humanity as revealed in the New Man Jesus\textsuperscript{131}. They will help accelerate in others that conversion of mentality and outlook which will make the reform of economic, social and political structures authentic and stable and place them in the service of a more just and peaceful coexistence\textsuperscript{132}. In striving for renewal in their witness and mission, all religious institutes are exhorted to procure for their members "a proper understanding of humanity, of the conditions of the times and of the needs of the Church, so that, making wise judgments about the contemporary world in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to help men and women more effectively"\textsuperscript{133}.

The problems facing religious life in its attempt to bring harmony between evangelization and human promotion have repercussions on the formation level. This might require a

\begin{table}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textsuperscript{130} & Sacred Congregation for Religious Life and secular Institutes(1978). Religious and Human Promotion 12 \\
\textsuperscript{131} & Gaudium et Spes 22 \\
\textsuperscript{132} & Ibid 63 \\
\textsuperscript{133} & Sacred Congregation for Religious Life and secular Institutes(1978). Mutual Relations 26-32 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
revision of formation programs and methods at the initial period as well as during the
successive phases and during ongoing formation. In this regard, a re-reading of the conciliar
criteria for renewal\textsuperscript{134} will show that it is not a question of simple adaptations of certain
external forms. It is a deep education in attitude and in life style which makes it possible to
remain true to one's self even in new forms of presence. This presence will always be \textit{as}
\textit{consecrated persons} who seek the full conversion of people and society to the ways of the
Gospel through witness and services\textsuperscript{135}. Since the \textit{missionary} dimension of the Church
depends especially on the generous availability of religious\textsuperscript{136} the formation of those called to
this excellent form of evangelization and human promotion will need to be genuinely
adaptable to the cultures, sensibilities and specific problems of the localities\textsuperscript{137}.

The above instructions from the official teachings of the church show that women
empowerment is not against spirituality. Sisters who keep shelter in spirituality live
comfortable in the safer zone of religious life. In novitiate itself these type of sisters could be
given strong conviction that the commitment to God in faith is commitment to people of God
in action. Faith without action is dead. In Tertianship they could be given special input
sessions on the duties of baptized Christians and consecrated persons along with practical
sessions. Spirituality is not against commitment to people, because spirit filled persons are
zealous to work for their brethren.

\textbf{6.5. Adopting from the Indian tradition – effective tool for interiorization}\textsuperscript{138}

Indian Guru-Sisya relationship and sannyasa are the sublime expressions of God-experience.
The religious formation system in India has to incorporate the deepest experiential and

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{134} Paul VI(1966). \textit{Ecclesiae Sanctae II}, 15-19, 33-38
\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Perfectar Caritatis}\textsuperscript{18}
\textsuperscript{136} Paul VI(1975). \textit{Evangelii Nuntiandi}\textsuperscript{69}
\textsuperscript{137} Vatican Council II(1965). \textit{Ad Gentes Divinitus}\textsuperscript{18}, 25-27
\textsuperscript{138} Bosco Correa(2007). \textit{Concept of Formation in Indian Tradition, Forming, Conforming, Transforming}, Manuel
Rebeiro (ed), Kalamassery : JD Publications.
\end{footnotesize}
interior values of Indian Guru-Sisya relationship and Sannyasa. Our religious and priestly formation should aim at interiority and an inner awakening to Christ, which is the basic vision of Christ. St. Mark puts the basic call as, Jesus appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to cast out demons [Mk.3:14]. The primary purpose of the call is to have an intimate relationship with Him and that the disciples may be his collaborators in proclaiming and establishing the Kingdom of God.

A true seeker of God (sadhaka) who strives after conforming one to the mind of Christ has to renounce everything, especially the self. A vairagi is the one who has no desires and no attachments and who is above the clingings and cravings. A sannyasin is to become a vairagi. It is the spirituality of totality through emptiness and glorification through self-emptying (Phil 2:7-11). Renunciation becomes total and genuine only when the renouncer includes himself / herself in the renunciation. The triple vows of religious life are considered to be the pillars on which Christian sannyasa stands. The vows of religious life is an authentic means to fight radically against the anti-Kingdom forces and dedicate themselves totally to the person of Christ and commit themselves to His Kingdom. Through the religious vows one renounces not only the material goods but also the very renouncer.

Adopting the good aspects of Indian outlooks into religious formation includes the virtue of hospitality. As Guru receives the disciples at home the religious are to acquire the generosity to be kind enough towards all people in respect of deeds. Indian and Biblical traditions call us to be sensitive and hospitable to the a-tithi (unannounced guest). Genuine hospitality implies and promotes at-homeness with oneself, with God and with one’s fellow humans. The words of Jesus are, “he who receives you receives me” (Mt. 10:40). So hospitality is the most essential point of our mission. Each member of the religious community exists to contribute his or her share in the fulfillment of this mission of hospitality. Therefore hospitality is to be practiced and taught in the formation houses.
The Indian formation system called Gurukulam functions in natural environment, often in
villages and forests. This helps them to realize that the Supreme divine Spirit manifests and
indwells itself in all creation. Human beings have the fantastic capacity to know God in
nature. A human being is endowed with consciousness to see that the whole created things of
this universe bear the foot prints or the finger tips of God after whom we are all in relentless
search. In the formation, the seeker should have the understanding that, a human being is
earth waking up to consciousness (prithini). The air fills the universe and air that permeates
the human body is the same vital force (prana). The water that flows through the river and the
water that fills the human body is the same water. The warmth of human life in human body
is the heat energy (tapah) that emanates from the sun. With the birds of the air and the lilies
of the field human being lives in the one common home feeding on the vital sap of the mother
earth.

In the formation the formees must have the practise of protecting and respecting earth, its
vegetative, animal and human inhabitants, and thus caring and guarding themselves.
Ecological crisis should become a grave concern in the philosophical and theological
deliberations. Eco-sensitivity will reach one to be patient, gentle, kind and listening. It
implies to attain harmony within oneself, with the nature, with fellow human beings and with
God. Ecology reminds one that the environment and human beings combine to form a single
system so that care for oneself must also extend to care for the environment (other persons
and nature). Creation according to Bible is for re-creation. God calls us for this re-creation.
The earth is given to till and to keep (Gen 1:15), to posses and cherish, to work and enjoy, to
guard and preserve. By way of respecting the mother earth the religious will learn also to
take care of women because women and earth are symbolically one unit.

The ultimate goal of human existence and that of a true seeker of the knowledge (sadaka) is
to attain the Darsana. Darsan (vision or seeing) is a source of direct knowledge and
experience. It is a direct, experiential and transcendental vision or knowledge of the reality. It is a vision of the Reality which leads the seeker to liberation. Darsana implies that the Vision of knowledge should not confine to intellectual level (lower knowledge or para-vidya), it has to lead one to the higher vision, beatific vision (apara-vidya). Darsana is the foundation of the response to Truth. The genuineness of the response to the Truth is based on the sravana, manana and nididhyasana process.

As regards the Christian religious their ultimate goal is to have Yesu-Darsana. We live in a world where anti-kingdom values are very much prevalent. We are being constantly manipulated by these anti-kingdom values. As a consequence a transformative response to the Truth becomes all the more difficult and challenging. Hence the temptations to be shaped by the anti-kingdom values are stronger than the good intentions to be transformed by the darsana of the Truth. A true disciple (sadhaka) is challenged to become an authentic embodiment of Yesu-Darsana, so that his life itself becomes a mission, an overflow of the Kingdom – values.

6.6. Conclusion

In Kerala society the religious women are preferred much in every field of social activities. It is expected that the women religious be in a position to know the society at large and the fellow women in particular by their formation. Thus they are supposed to be effective in these fields as leaders of the society. The effectiveness depends on how during the stages of formation they are freed them from all their inhibitions, wounds and peculiarities. They should be free from fear and be courageous to take risk to dedicate themselves for the cause of the abandoned humanity. The formators and the formation community must be of broad world vision to equip this women religious properly. They should get convictions to act according to the needs of the times.
An attitudinal change is the proposed solution for the problem of ineffectiveness of sisters in the matter of abandoned, abused women flock. This change could be brought in only through giving right convictions to the formees through theoretical studies. Practical sessions through exposure programmes would motivate the formees to dedicate for their convictions. Serving the society is an obligation by the very fact of consecration in the church. During the most important periods of formation such as novitiate and tertianship the convictions can be deepened by meditating the Scriptures and reading the signs of the time, with the sense of responsibility towards the society and with compassion to the victims of social abuse. During these periods the empowering of the formees must be given importance so that they could dedicate themselves for the cause of the voiceless in the society.

The Biblical basis of formation emphasizes the need to imitate Jesus in the Gospels. Theologically speaking, passion for Christ and compassion for humanity is the nature of religious life. A concrete project of formation proposed would guide to solve the problem of ineffectiveness in the field of empowering marginalized women. It is clear in the light of the teachings of the church and in the opinion of experts that the contemplation is not against commitment to the world. Formation in Indian tradition also motivates to dedicate for the cause of women. Eco-sensitivity will reach one to be patient, gentle, kind and listening. Thus eco-sensitive formation in Indian tradition would also motivate a person to dedicate for social issues.