

Chapter VI

A COMPARISON OF ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF HINDUISM AND JUDAISM

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A comparative study of the religions shows that every race of men in every age and country at every stage of cultural development has been under the influence of some sort of religious beliefs, sentiments and practices. It may help to understand each other better and their own heritages. Though there are sectarian differences among the advocates of religions, still there are common points of agreement among them. However different they may be on rituals, they lay down the doctrines they preach and the rewards they promise, they have a sufficiency of common elements which constitute their essence and which are strikingly similar everywhere, they are not identical. The basic problems of all religions are the same - constant upward movement of the consciousness, to gain salvation and to unite with God, and divinize the life and to establish the kingdom of Heaven upon the earth. They differ only in their outward methods and intellectual approach to the solution of these problems. All the religions of the world have a fundamental unity that lies at the root of each religion. The whole universe is a tremendous core of unity in variety. Every religion accepts the existence of god, believes

that religion is essential for man, religion is true, religion stresses on devotion, self control, self sacrifice and self realisation, worship, prayer, sacrifice and dedication. Every religion teaches high morality, noble character, tolerance, piety, purity and universal brotherhood. All religions advocate peace, unity, bliss, welfare and humanism. Since one religion will not suit the whole of mankind, there are different stages of mental development and varying degrees of spiritual evolution and different phases of religious thought and practice. Hence all religions have their explanation, place and purpose. The knowledge of the universal truths of practical value of Hinduism and Judaism gives the feeling of fundamental sameness of these two religions and hence the unity of all religions. All the great religions have given answers to most of the problems, fairly consistent with one another. Dr. Annie Besant, the founder of the Theosophical Society in India, tried to bring about a unity of mankind. "She tried to combine the wisdom of all religions with Indian strength, and advanced an idea of a common wealth of brotherhood."¹ Dr. Radhakrishnan prepared the ground for inter-religious friendship and that different religions must come together and must develop a spirit of comprehension which will break down prejudice and misunderstanding and bind them together as varied expressions of a single truth.

1. D. R. Jatava, Evolution Of Indian Social Thought (Jaipur : Bohra Publications, 1987), p. 189.

All the religions of the world can be basically classed into Eastern and Western groups. Among the Eastern or oriental faiths include Hinduism which think of Supreme reality as impersonal. This impersonal, featureless Absolute can be thought of better as 'it' than 'he' or 'she'. The Western religion more accurately the Mid Eastern Religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, produced a clear and fully personal monotheism. God is fully personal and He is the ultimate reality. all the religions either fall on the group of prophetic religion or mystic religion. Hinduism is a mystic religion whereas Judaism is a prophetic religion. There is always some one or something from which the human soul should be saved. For mystical religion it is the human condition subject to birth and death, old age and decay and for prophetic religion this something is usually sin or evil.

When two religions are compared the ethics and moral issues are treated as extremely important. It is in the field of morals that the atmosphere of mutual recrimination rather than appreciation seems to be most marked. It is in the field of ethics that the misunderstanding has been most acute and it is the only field in which two religions have a common ground. In matters of metaphysical and theological beliefs, in forms of worship and prayer, the two religions differ vastly, but when it comes to the ethical implications of the metaphysical beliefs the gap becomes consistently narrower. Though the two systems start

from different premises the pictures of the good life that emerge are by and large similar. The most important reason for this is the intimate relation between ethics and religion. "A religion worth the name must incorporate some system of morality for the guidance of its followers."² Hence a comparative study of the ethics of two religions will lead into a true significance of these two religions. All religious ethics are theological in nature. The eternal life is the goal of all religions, and the ethics or moral behaviour is the only aid or instrument for achieving this.

The Vedic religion and the Hebrew religion can be considered roughly contemporary. In a particular sense both religions can be said to have confined to one geographical area. One being namely India and the other Israel. There is a line of similarity between these two religions during the first phase of their origin. The Vedic religion was rooted in the polytheistic nature of worship of the pre-historic people and the Hebrew religion also was preceded by the polytheistic customs and institutions of the pre-historic semetic world. Polytheism and idolatry were not uncommon in ancient Israel down to the time of the Babylonian exile. But the prophets and historians were loyal to the exclusive worship of Yahweh. Thus the pre-exilic period

2. Shrivesh Chandra Thakar, Christian And Hindu Ethics (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 18.

contained almost as miscellaneous and polytheistic a collection as is found in Rig Veda. Hinduism in course of generations became worshippers of idols. There was a strong tendency to externalize religion and to surround it with symbols, which in common minds, soon usurped the place of the thing signified. But the Hebrew scriptures are more remarkable on their perpetual stern denunciation of idolatry. Most wisely and too vehemently did the prophets thunder against the worship of images. During the early Hebrew history the monotheism of the prophets was in an unstable equilibrium. The advocates of the monotheism were merely a minority and more over the Hebrew theism was more henotheistic than monotheistic.

A comparison of the Upanisadic Rishis of India and the prophets of Israel show much common features. Both were considered to have existed in the same period. "A position corresponding to the one that the prophets hold in the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Bible is held up by the Upanisads in the Hindu scriptures."³ There are major and minor Upanisads as there are major and minor prophets. Both the prophets and the Indian Upanisads deal with eternal spiritual values of life. But the thoughts of both of them are not the same. Their system of

3. Anjivel Mathew, The Message Of The Hebrew Prophets (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1970), p. 14.

thoughts arose out of two entirely different national and religious backgrounds and traditions. The position of Rishis and prophets were of the same pattern. There were Rishis as well as prophets who were well renowned and respected by the people. So also there were people who were disliked and condemned by the common people.

The scriptures are the source book of the study of any religion. With regard to the Sastras of Hinduism and the scriptures of Judaism there are similarities as well as differences. The scriptures that form the source of Hinduism are many in number and are voluminous. They are collections of units produced at different periods by different persons. Hence any one could wish to claim that he is directly familiar with them all. They are marked by a despondency ever ready to darken into despair. The whole concept which Hinduism forms of human life is overwhelmingly sad. Science is largely introduced and authoritatively taught in many of the Hindu Sastras. History is absent in the Sastras like prophecy. There is no consistency of thought in the Vedas and Upanisads. Thus we can see different elements of polytheism, monotheism, pantheism and monism mixed up in these scriptures. The old Testament or Bible which forms the source book of Judaism is an organic whole. Science is most sparingly introduced, and never authoritatively taught in the Bible. History and prediction form an important constituent of the Old Testament. We can see a uniform trend of religious

thought that pervades the whole of Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi. Bible is a book of hope. The Hindu Stastras and Old Testament resemble in the fact that both are composed in prose as well as verse. Hymns as the expressions of devotional sentiment, abound in both scriptures. Ritual to regulate worship, political and social laws form an important part of the Sastras and also of the Hebrew scriptures. They are both religions of love and gratitude. Both Hinduism and Judaism have mothered many religions. Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism emerged from Hinduism and Christianity and Islam are those emerged from Judaism.

In both Hinduism and Judaism, there is a parallel of mythological thought as to the evolution of the universe and its rhythmic destruction. The pralaya in Hinduism indicates the destruction of the universe at the end of each yuga. When the world becomes full of adharma, the God causes a pralaya or flood and recreates the universe afresh. So also in Hebrew mythology, there is the reference of the huge flood in which the God destroys everything except Noah and his family and a pair of each animal and plant life.

Several hymns in Rig Veda deal with the creation of the cosmos through entities. One of such entity that we meet is the Golden Embryo (Hiranya Garbha) out of whom emanated the universe, a god called 'All Maker' (Visvakarman), a feminine entity called voice or sound (vac) and Time (kala). The first two

entities were consolidated into a new god called prajapati; the Lord of progeny, conceived of the gods and of all other things whatever. The well known purusha sukta of the Rig Veda tells us of a mighty grant, who was at first the only being in existence. Feeling lonely he produced a feminine entity, Viraj (Shining Forth). From their union came a second Purusha and after him the gods. It is also believed that the primordial Sakti of the Indo Aryans from whom every thing proceeds and who pervades every thing is a female principle. The Hebrews believed that it was Yahweh that created the world and every thing in it. Yahweh of the Hebrews is a male principle and he has no feminine deity beside him. Both Hinduism and Judaism argue that the Divine, supernatural, transcendental and sacred, is real and it does exist. The reality, the nature of the supernatural is unique. It has a special ontological status such that it is no way dependent on other beings. God is self existing, having no other source than itself. Though it is applied to the impersonal category of the Hindu thought or the monotheism of the Judaism, the divine is uniquely self-existent. The attitude of absolute dependence on God is common to Hinduism and Judaism. "Know (that) All this, whatever, moves in this moving world is enveloped by God. Therefore, find your enjoyment in renunciation, do not covet what belongs to others."⁴ "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerities thou dost practise, do that (O Son of

4. Isa Upaniṣad, 1.

Kunti - Arjuna), as an offering to Me."⁵ According to Judaism, there was nothing else apart from God before the act of creation. He produced the world out of sheer nothingness. Hence God is the sole and sufficient cause of the world.

There are different views with regard to the creation of the world among Hindus. Hindu concept of evolution starts with emanation of living things from the Divinity as a reproductive act of hatching of an egg or division of a Divinity into a male and female halves. The act of creation, being offered as an oblation at the great primordial sacrifice, was started by Purusha and therefor the world may be said to be a result thereof. The creation exnihilo is an exception to the rule of Hinduism. The most pronounced sankhya philosophy of evolution states that both the spirit or (purusha) and matter (prakriti) are self existent and not indebted to any creation by an outside agency such as God. With regard to the Advaita thought of evolution a concept of personal God and his creation leads only to an inferior line of philosophic thinking. Nyaya theory of creation holds that there are eternal constituents of the universe, which can neither be created nor destroyed. God had only arranged these constituents into different substances in accordance with the requirements of karma. Gita combined this view and conceived that Purusha and Prakirti are the two aspects of one Supreme person, Purushothama.

5. Gita, 9-27.

Thus generally in Hinduism both matter and spirit are equally primordial in the creation of the world. Hence it differs from the Jewish view of creation that God created the world out of nothing. Judaism considers world as created by God and separate from God. It depends on God for its existence, nature and working. It is real, but created and separate. Advaita Hinduism believes that the Absolute alone exists and world and other things are neither created nor separate from God. They are in a sense inferior in comparison to the ontological reality. As for the Jews they believe that the nature is the creation of God. In Pslams we have passages like

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle
he put the deeps in store houses.
Let all the earth fear the Lord, Let all the
inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
For he spoke, and it came to be he commanded
and it stood forth.

Amos pictures God as He who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought who makes the morning darkness, and treads in the heights of the earth - the Lord, the God of the hosts - is his name.⁷

6. Psalmas, 33-6-9.

7. Amos, 4-13.

Revealed religions entertain a personal conception of divine reality and are exceedingly definite. The revealed religions have a static concept of revelation, that is, the total way of life, beliefs, rituals and practices are considered to be of divine origin. It is a deliberate and definite act of self-communication on the part of divine power. Reality that is personal will sooner or later seek to communicate directly with other personal beings such as man. The revealed religions insist that very few of their scriptures have the sacred character. Thus Muslims value Koran, Jews the Torah, Christians the Bible. Revelation is associated with the ideas of the revealer (God) the undesirability of the truth revealed, and the particular person to whom the truth is revealed. In Judaism it is accepted that the truths are revealed by God to a particular person at a particular time and place. Judaism is revealed in the sense that what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man, he has made known in one form or another by revelation. It is revealed in the sense that special commandments had been given to Adam, Noah, Abraham and Jacob. It was to Moses that the complete revelation was given once for all. Hinduism is a revealed religion in a special sense. The Vedas and Upanisads which form the basis of Hinduism had been revealed to the seers of the past and had been handed down from generation to generation. It is considered as a revealed religion in the sense that they came from divine supernatural and received by rishis and transmitted to

future generation. The Hindu Sruti is more impersonal and the human recipients' essential function is to hear that which is heard. The realization of the truths and their expressions were the result of gradual process of reflection by many individuals through centuries. The individuals as historical persons are not so important as the truths discovered. But Moses is such a person in Judaism that without him there is not relevance for the religion. The person to whom revealed is as important as the truths revealed. The Hindu seers are no longer regarded as privileged mediators between the Divine and man. Their truths cannot properly be called revelations, but insights into an intention of the depths of man's life and existence.

Both religions made rooms for ethics by stipulating that an ethical life is a pre-condition or an essential preparation for the attainment of the highest spiritual end, that is redemption or moksa. All religious ethics are theological in nature. The eternal life is the goal of all religions and the ethics or moral behaviour is the only aid or instrument for achieving this. Morality is nothing but what God expects us to do and we have an absolute obligation to do what God commands. The concept of duty forms the nucleus of both Hindu and Jewish ethics. Hindu religion says that the failure to do the right will meet with its consequences. That is, those who ignore dharma cannot get away with it. The eternal law as well as the natural moral law in Hinduism is Dharma. Dharma is the very foundation of the

universe and is written in the minds of men and is revealed through scriptures. Jews accept natural moral law as an aspect of the divine eternal law which has its source in god. The Hebrew view is slightly different. They regarded the principles of justice, mercy and good neighbourliness always as God's principles, and God himself is concerned with them, and He would not let the offender go unpunished. To the Hebrew prophets sin was an offence against god himself and he would take severe notice of it. The Vedic Hindus believed that the Moral Law or order has been laid down by god and men were regarded as being under obligation to obey this law. Jewish ethics is essentially oriented towards love of god. It is a love in gratitude for all those great and terrible things that god did for them. Jewish morality is an essentially simple and unsophisticated system. There is a single all powerful and mighty God who has been benevolent but at the same time terrible. The people of Israel have to obey the laws and commandments of the God as revealed to them through their scripture Jews accept moral laws whose author is none other than god himself and that morality consists in obeying this law. "The belief in a Righteous God, the awareness of a Moral Law or moral order imposed by this god which had to be respected, and the conviction that there was a life of holiness which ought to be lived."⁸ It is through righteousness that man establishes his relation with God. Ethical conduct is the way and

8. Shrivesh Chandra Thakar, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

its reference to God must be established. "Righteousness brings Salvation when it is motivated guided and practised by faith in God."⁹ The highest degree of perfection is approaching God and sharing in his happiness.

Ethical activity has validity only when it promotes the ultimate and as conceived by the religion. So in order to estimate the value of Hinduism and Judaism as systems of morality one has to consider their respective views of the ultimate end. Both Judaism and Hinduism prescribe religious ends as truly transcendental. The ethical ideal advocated by Judaism is righteousness or holiness and Hinduism appeals to dharma. Righteousness and holiness are preconditions of fellowship with god. Hinduism regards the performance of dharma as a necessary condition to the attainment of moksa. Morality is what god enjoins us to do. Some have an absolute obligation to do what god commands. Man's freedom is taken for granted in the Upanisads. Man chooses to be morally good or morally bad. He is responsible for his acts. Evil is the free act of the individual who uses his freedom for his own exaltation. But the Upanisads do not merely assume man's freedom, they seem to hold that certain psychological conditions predispose man to virtue or vice. Man in his original

9. Israel Mattuk, Jewish Ethics (London : Hutchinson's University Library, 1953), p. 27.

nature is divine, free from sin and suffering. He is responsible for the bondage of his soul and he has to try for its liberation. The root cause of ills and sufferings is the ignorance of reality - wrong knowledge of ourself and the world. Jews believe that man is made in the image of god and has been endowed with intelligence, with the power of creativity on a limited scale and with the power of the fact that all his powers and privileges are gifts of God rather than his absolute rights. The Jews count themselves as unique, chosen by god among all his creations. Whereas the Hindus know themselves as but one of the many forms of life in the universe. While, to Jews, prophets act as the chief moralising unit, the Dharma Shastras form the chief moralising agent for Hinduism. Life according to Judaism is a moral striving and man has to become a co-worker with God in His divine activities. As far as the Hindus are concerned the true aim of human existence is holiness, emulating God, striving to do good for the sake of good without expectation of anything. Judaism sets down a moral code of conduct for individual perfection. Man is urged to conquer unholy desires and impure passions and to resist temptations of every kind. Self control and self-abnegation is the first stage of human development through which self-perfection is attained. The highest form of self-control is that which is exhibited in the cause of god. Every act of self-restraint, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice in the service of god or fellowmen leads to perfection. The true spirit of

Judaism does not teach man to run away from the world and be an ascetic. God is the ideal of morality and perfection which gives to the Jew a motive power and an inspiration to attempt the attainment of perfection and to lead a noble life. The human life must be an imitation of divine goodness and holiness. Self-preservation and self-perfection are the primary duties of every Jew.

Ethical monotheism is an exclusive character that contributes supremely to the personality of deity. Of all the Rig Vedic gods ethical quality belongs supremely to Varuna. Varuna represented the nearest approach, in Vedic India to the doctrines of monotheism. There is no hymn to Varuna in which the prayer for forgiveness of guilt does not occur. Vedic Varuna, in his ethical strength has a Hebraic flavour. Thus Varuna came very near to being a Rig Vedic Jehweh, full of compassion and grace, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. But by the pantheistic monism of the later Rig Vedic period, Brahma mounted upon Varuna and thus the monotheism has been replaced by the monism. The conceptions like Rita, karma and maya which are the products of the will of Varuna, correspond to the holy will of God in Judaism. Hinduism though believes in a supreme God, has different manifestations in many gods. Any one form can be worshipped as a form of the supreme reality. Hinduism is thus a unique form of monotheism

which believes in the unity of Gods in God. The one God whom the prophets have proclaimed is one not because He is the Summation of all the gods of the heaven, but He is one because He differs from them in that the reality and certainty of the one god finds its seat in Him. To know God does not imply an understanding of the nature of His Being, but a knowledge of His government, a perception of and an effort to follow the right way, the way which God has revealed and which is the same for all types of human beings. "The Jews believed not in a metaphysical absolute but in a personal God eternally acting and ceaselessly interested in His creatures, specially bound up with their own history."¹⁰ Before the time of the great pre-exilic prophets Israel had attained an anthropomorphic conception of the national God. In the later evolution, the conception of God became purified of its anthropomorphic characteristics. The early crudities, both sensuous and moral vanished. The God of Modern Jewish theism emerged, as eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, supremely just, merciful, righteous and holy. In the process of deanthropomorphization, the Hebrew God did not tend to become an abstraction, intelligible only to philosophical thinkers and incapable of appealing to the understanding and emotions of the plain man. The religiously desirable features of the earlier anthropomorphism were preserved.

10. S. Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions And Western Thought 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 270.

There is a general tendency to spiritual theism, which employs the notions of divine creator, a world guided by over ruling providence, and finite souls having aspirations to immortality. This minimum of rational theology is to be found in Hinduism as well as in Judaism. In Hinduism there is a trend of spiritual theism in spite of an impersonal pantheism. In Judaism God reveals himself through natural phenomena, but rises superior to them. It derives other gods and other cults. Jehweh becomes a god of justice and mercy, as well as the god for the whole world.

All religions agree in believing in the existence of a soul and recognize some other wordly interests. Hinduism and Judaism both believe in the immortality of soul. Both of them accept the view that body is perishable. "For dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return"¹¹ is the view of the Jews. Hinduism believes in eternal and immortal Souls. It believes that animals as well as plants have souls. Though all the souls are potentially equal, they are not equally evolved and equally capable of liberation. The souls reach its highest evolutionary level in human beings. Once it enters the body, it is the law of karma that determines its destiny. Spiritual and moral progress is attained when its adjuncts are discarded. Jews believe that soul is eternal and indestructible. If a person performs noble work, he is rewarded, while evil actions deserve punishment. So

11. Genesis, 3-19.

every individual receives the fruit according to his actions. Man's primary duty is to work, because work is worship, work is life and work is the way towards salvation. "The prevailing representation was that the soul by nature imperishable and at death goes to the place and lot in another sphere of existence which the individual has observed by his character and conduct in this life."¹² Jews believe that death is only to the physical body and the soul survives in some form. It is the soul that either reaps the reward of eternal communion with God or suffers eternal damnation in hell.

The Jews do not think of body and soul as distinct and separate. Instead they together constitute man. The body and soul are regarded as 'good' for both are created by God, hence is the marked absence of asceticism among the Jews, to whom the rejection of the body is intrinsically sinful and evil and the ascetic idea is foreign. The doctrine that body and soul together constitute man has led to the doctrine of 'resurrection of the body' when the dead shall be called forth from their graves. The reverent burial of the body in substantial tombs, preferably within the borders of the promised land is the result of this belief. It appears that Jews are uncertain about what would happen to each person's life after he is dead. There is a common

12. George Foot Moore, *Judaism* Vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 114-15.

view in Israel that when a man dies, he is passed into the listless state of existence. There is a view that when a man dies he goes to a shadowy land of darkness called sheol, where personality ceases for righteous and wicked alike. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might for there is not work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in sheol to which you are going."¹³ In India too much concern was felt regarding life after death. In the Chandogya Upanisad it is said that He who has created everything is the Atman residing in the heart of each individual. One who has attained the true knowledge that he is identical with Brahman does not conceive of death as a reality. It is the physical body that undergoes death, but the soul has no end.

Both religions declare that man's enemy is his false pride and ego. Evil and sin are inherent in human nature. They are due to the impurity of human mind. Sin consists in man's placing his will in opposition to God's will. Thus the consequence of sin consists in surrendering or separating man from the fellowship of God. This is due to the exaggerated self love or ego of man, the feeling of 'I' or 'mine'. The Hindu view is that it is the ego or aham that causes bondage in man and prevents him from realising the higher knowledge. The Hindu concept is that the embodiment of the soul is due to ignorance or avidya

13. Ecclestartes, 9-10.

which is a cosmic principle. In Judaism the main cause of man's fall is his attempt to be God; whereas, in Hinduism it is man's forgetfulness. Though there is apparent difference, the result in each case is the same. In Judaism the god does not punish the sinners but desires the sinner to return to Him. It is the prayer and repentance that bridges the gulf between human soul and god.

Salvation is a state of being. It is the soul's becoming a part of the ultimate eternal reality. To Hinduism Salvation is to be from the ignorance or darkness. The error is in accepting the Soul's lesser condition of separation from the primal unity. In Hinduism salvation is attained when there is the realisation of true being of themselves. Hinduism is unlimitedly tolerant in willing to allow a variety of ways for salvation. In Judaism humanity suffers first of all from the pride and rebellion in refusing to accept its creaturely status to obey and serve God. Estrangement or separation from God is a symptom of humanity's fallen state. Salvation is effectuated only by God and with His help and grace. The believers do not earn redemption but receive it. Salvation is given not grasped or accomplished. Redemption in Judaism puts the redeemed souls as part of a redeemed humanity in a redeemed world. Judaism differs from Hinduism in that it is highly intolerant and insists that belief in their religion is the only true way to salvation.

The ceremonial exclusiveness of the Hebrews might be paralleled by that of the Hindus. The ceremonial systems of both ancient Hinduism and Judaism were complex. There are some remarkable similarities in the view of the sacrifices taken by both the religions. Sacrifice occupies a very important place in both and its origin is referred to primereal times. The prophets did not reject sacrifices, if offered in the right spirit. "The Sabbaths, festivals, sacrifice, worship, homely ritual, pious faith and thanks giving for the gifts of nature are sanctioned by high moral lessons."¹⁴ Sacrifice prevailed from the period of Moses. It was an offering of somekind made to a spirit or God to express or secure friendly relation with it. Sacrificial rituals, as a means of achieving religious values, had an important place in the growth of religion. Sacrifices include both animals and grains or fruits. Hindu religion also gives a prominent place to sacrifices which it calls Yajnas. It began in the Vedic age and continued ever since. The purpose of these yajnas were to gain the favour of gods for success in life here as well as hereafter. The idea of sacrifice of Hindus is different from other races in that they are more powerful than the gods. These sacrifices were replaced by reflections and meditations at the time of Upanisads. "It is foolish people who acclaim them as the highest good and they fall again and again into the domain of old age and death."¹⁵

14. Ganganath Jha, The Philosophical Discipline (Delhi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1979), p. 116.

15. Mundaka Upaniṣad, 1-2-7.

Human sacrifice existed in Vedic times. Human sacrifice was regarded as the highest expression of worship. Amongst the Hebrews the sacrifice of the first born was at one time observed. The first reference is to the story of Abraham being ready to offer his son Issac in sacrifice. Jepthah¹⁶ one of the Judges and king Manasseh¹⁷ are mentioned by name in the historical books as having killed their own offsprings in the name of religion.

Worship of trees, mountains, stones, rivers, streams, waters, etc. were common for both religions. Terebirth is a sacred tree of the Jews where as pepal tree is worshipped by Hindus. Mountains also play significant role in religious observances. Water is venerated because it is considered as the dwelling place of life-giving deity. Ritual washing and immersion are of religious importance in both religions. This observances are fused in the Christian rite baptism. Washing of feet is an act of personal hygiene among the Jews. Prayer is common to all religions. A unique feature of Jewish prayer is that it is performed in group followed by certain external symbols.

The sacrament of upanayana is a fundamental rite in Hindu society. The social status and personal rights of the

16. Judges, 11-34.

17. Kings, 21-6.

twice-born depend upon it. Without upanayana an individual is doomed to social degradation, ignorance and poverty. The upanayana of the Hindu society can be compared to the circumcision of the Jewish family. Circumcision is a fundamental observance of the Jews which admits a youth to full membership in the holy community and to participate in Jewish worship.

With regard to marriage in both Hindu and Jewish communities there are certain similarities as well as differences. While Hindus consider marriage as a religious sacrament the Jews take it as a contract. Among the Jews marriage has been regarded as the only proper state for an adult. Levirate marriages were common in both Hindu and Jewish societies. Marriages between a man and his widowed sister-in-law without a son was regarded legal. In both religions the ceremony was associated with the prevention of property from being passed into the control of rival hands. Hinduism considers woman as man's own half, share and share alike, created to free him from fear and to give him delight. For Biblical people she was merely an object of pleasure, made out of a dispensible rib of the body of man.