

## P R E F A C E

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF HINDUISM AND JUDAISM is the topic chosen for the thesis to be submitted to the Kerala University for Ph.D. It is a general survey on the two great World Religions with regard to their Ethical and Social aspects. Both the religions originated in the continent of Asia and established themselves firmly on their grounds.

All religions though dressed in different garments, preach the same principles of tolerance, brotherhood, charity and love. Hinduism and Judaism are not exceptions. The Talmud says "The pious of all nations shall have a share in the life to come." A daily Hindu prayer is that, "As different streams having different sources and with wanderings crooked or straight, all reach the sea, so Lord, the different paths which men take guided by their different tendencies, all lead to one."

To deny other religions is the height of irreligion and the worst form of uncharitableness and intolerance. It is

only through the practice of the moral idealistic aphorisms expounded by the founders of the great religions can man's salvation be achieved.

The topic of study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter has three sub-divisions, a general outlook of religion, origin and development of Hinduism and origin and development of Judaism. The second chapter deals with the ethical aspect of Hinduism and the third chapter, the ethical aspect of Judaism. The social aspect of Hinduism and the social aspect of Judaism form the fourth and fifth chapters respectively. A comparison of both the ethical and social aspects of these two religions comes as the sixth chapter.

Religion is a constitutional necessity of man and is an essential element in all human progress. The different religions though devotedly called by different names show a surprising likeness of spirit and life. It is a unique specific expression and cannot be equated with anything. The various definitions by different people convey only some of the aspects of it. Religion has its origin along with mankind and to trace its origin and development has been very difficult. The source which

I relied on for the study of Hinduism are mainly the translated works on Vedas, Upanisads and the Epics. The works of Dr.S.Radhakrishnan and many other eminent scholars have been very useful in writing this part of the thesis. The study of Hinduism which is a very vast religion, whose sources are scattered in, through the ages, vast volumes of scriptures, tradition, life etc. is strenuous a task. This part of the thesis is only a very brief account of it. Judaism is the ancient monotheistic religion of the Hebrews and is the mother of Christianity and Islam. The Old Testament forms the main source of the study of the religion. The Hebrew religion is revealed through the story of the patriarchs, prophets, judges, kings etc. The origin of the Hebrew religion can be traced through the history of the people, it becoming more spiritual as the generation passed. The ethical monotheism which is the cardinal belief of the Hebrews is the contribution of the Hebrew prophets.

Ethics is the steel foundation of the spiritual life of Hinduism. It is the practical side of Hinduism and is the means to its metaphysics. Hence it is an indispensable condition for spiritual realisation. The supreme purpose of life, shreyas and the mundane good, preyas, reached through ethics are combined

by the Gita in its Nishkama karma. All the schools of Indian thought give importance to ethics as it enables to discriminate Soul from body and senses. The moral law that governs human beings is termed Dharma and the moral law that governs nature is the Rta. The doctrine of karma or the law of sowing and reaping is a distinctive feature of Hindu ethics. Karma explains all the phenomena of nature, justifies the caste system, family religion etc. It is a great riddle of the origin of suffering and inequality of human conditions. Karma explains the principle of cause and effect in the moral world and the diversity of human conditions are due to the doctrine of karma. It is the phala of karma that determines the birth and nature of man. Karma thus explains both cosmic and moral order. The concept of transmigration follows the theory of Karma. The Hindu belief in the cycle of birth and death is a necessary consequence of the karma doctrine. Samsara or repeated birth and rebirth can be overcome by Nishkarma karma. The Gita identifies the golden rule of karma and desire in the doctrine of Nishkarma karma. It is the principle of gunas that determines different grades of people in Hinduism. Thus we have Brahmanas with sattvaguna, Kshatriyas with rajo guna, Vaisyas with tamo guna and Sudras with none of these gunas. The four ends of man known as purusharthas form the

main part of Hindu ethics. The empirical as well as the spiritual life of an individual is directed towards these ends. They are kama, artha, dharma and moksa. Kama, artha and dharma together leads to moksa. Dharma is the primary purushartha when moksa is concerned. Dharma is the principle of righteousness and by practising it alone one can attain moksa. There are samanyadharmas and svadharmas. Samanyadharmas consist of the tenfold dharma of Manu, the Law Giver of Hindus. The specific or personal dharma falls under the term varnasrama dharma. The varna dharma pertains to those dharmas according to the Varna or Caste to which one belongs and the asrama dharmas are those that pertain to the different stages of human beings. Thus the four varnas - Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra have specific duties as the four ashramas namely brahmacharya, garhastya, vanaprastha and sanyasa have. By observing all the stipulated duties prescribed to each individual one can attain the supreme level of mukti or moksa which is the summum bonum of Hinduism.

The ethical life of Judaism consists of a system of human conduct, a law of righteousness which man should follow in order to live. Religion and ethics are related in that both aim at social righteousness. The Bible and Talmud form the main basis

of Jewish ethics and are a permanent guide to their ethical conduct. The law, the prophets and the writings contain the moral precepts. The spiritual and cultural unity of the scattered Jews were achieved through the ethical conduct. Torah which is the foundation of morality, handed down to posterity through Moses, has its source in God. It is the revelation of God's attributes and the emanation from his nature. It is the law to train the people in holiness and is the instruction, from God, which aims in the idealisation of all earthly actions. The Ten Commandments are the obligatory duties which the God expected from the people. The ethical duty should be done from pure sense of duty. By following the law man comes to God, by taking it into his life, he puts his life in accord with God's life. God is conceived as the archetype of ethics and morality from which all rules of conduct follows. Jewish God is highly personal and a calling God. He is holy (kadosh). Ethical conduct is the way to Salvation. Rewards and punishment are a corollary of the philosophy based on duty. The destiny of man kind is more important than that of an individual. The ethical monotheism is the most outstanding feature of Judaism in the history of religions.

Social virtues can be practised only within the society. The beginning of Hindu society was in the matriarchal form. Women dominated and the line of heridity was traced after the mother. The predominance of mother goddesses and the other female deities showed the importance of a matriarchal society. The primordial sakti itself was a female principle. The settled life gave rise to agriculture and patriarchal form of society in which father dominated. Marriage and family became necessary constituents for a settled life. Marriage laid the legal and religious foundation for a family life. Family was the unit of society and formed the corporate unit for its members to meet their common needs. It was a natural organic unity between the parents and children. The ancestor-worship was a feature of Hindu society in which the patriarch dominated. The joint family system was something peculiar to Hindu society. Nuclear families emerged out of joint families. Sacrifices and ceremonies played an important role in Hindu society. Women enjoyed a respectful position always. She has been honoured and protected from the time of Vedas till recently. Certain laws and regulations were laid down by Law givers like Manu in order to safeguard her position and retain her chastity in the society. As wife and mother she was respected always. Certain evils like sati, child

marriage, prohibition of widow marriages existed during certain periods. But social reformers of the time tried to eliminate these evils from the Hindu society.

Social life of a Jew is more important than his individual life. It is in and through the society that a Jew identifies himself as a Jew. Their social thought, loyalty and patriotism grew out of social suffering. All the Jewish patterns of group life have been regarded as direct commands of God and feasts, fasts, etc. have the same note of holiness. The Sabhath is such a festival which is distinctive for the Jews. It is the Sabhath that has kept Israel. It is the Sabhath, the strength of Jews, which held all together at the time of the Dispersion. It proves fundamental equality to all men. At the Holy Day festival, Passover is an equally important festival of the Jews as it is commemorative of the miraculous escape from Egypt, under the leadership of Moses. Eating the unleavened bread is the conspicuous feature of the celebration. Pentacost is a harvest festival and it commemorates the revelation at Sinai. Succoth is another festival of the Jews celebrated to keep in memory the miserable life of the Jews in the wilderness. Yomkippur or Day of Atonement is a day of forgiveness and they feel a personal sense

of familiarity and comfort with the God. Synagogue plays an important role in the social life of Judaism. Prayer is of much importance since it bridges the gap between man and God. Prayer offered by a congregation is more important than done individually. Circumcision is another observance which is a divine institution given by God to Abraham and his descendants. It is an indispensable requirement for a male Jew to be admitted to full membership in religious as well as social observances and worship. Marriage is a divine ordinance instituted by God to multiply and replenish the earth. It takes place in two stages, the betrothal and actual marriage ceremony. Family in Judaism is a religious institution to foster ideals of holiness. It is the ground of love, brotherhood, co-operation, freedom, responsibility justice etc. In the primary stage female descent was the common line of descent in Judaism. Women occupied the foremost position in the family. Motherhood was the sign of a woman. Father had the supreme authority over the family.

The sixth chapter is a comparison of both ethical and social aspects of Hinduism and Judaism. The religion of all time and place convey the same principle. The difference is only in their external observances, practices etc. Fundamentally all

religions are one and the same. The basic problems like life, death, God, Salvation etc. are fundamentally the same. But views differ according to the temperaments, tradition etc. Ethics of these two religions prepare human beings to be virtuous and good. Righteousness is the way to Salvation. They differ only in their view to achieve this end. The ultimate reacting in both religions is one. The difference is that while Hinduism believes in the absolute monoism, Judaism believes in absolute monotheism.