CHAPTER 7

COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION
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Comparative study of religions is a systematic attempt to explain the similarities in religious beliefs, customs and traditions. Such a study attempts to promote a better understanding and fellowship of religions. R.S. Srivastava while explaining the importance of comparative study of religions says that through such a study, "there is a possibility of drawing religions into closer proximity and of imparting respect and understanding for the religions of the world other than our own".¹ Radhakrishnan, a contemporary exponent of comparative study of religions, very clearly says, "Comparative Religion helps us to further this ideal of free sharing among religions which no longer stand in uncontaminated isolation. They are regarded as different experiments influencing one another in producing a free and creative civilisation. They are all engaged in the common effort to build a higher and more stable life. They are fellow workers toward the same goal".² All religions are different experiences to attain the same goal of emancipation of human beings from all their miseries. All religions provide their own spiritual way of inwardisation to achieve this goal. All religions emphasise ethical or moral way of disciplining our life as a preparation for higher spiritual growth. Inspite of many such basic common elements among religions, today there is more misunderstanding, negative understanding and narrow fanatic understanding rather than proper understanding of religions. To develop a better

understanding of two great religions, Christianity and Hinduism, a comparison of similar ideas in the concept of salvation is attempted in this study.

7.1 COMPARISON

A comparison of similar ideas in the concept of salvation in Christianity and Hinduism is possible and a needed one. Such a comparison is attempted here with the sole aim of developing a better understanding of these two religions. The method of comparison used in this study is to bring out the similarities in the various aspects of salvation like meaning, method and significance of salvation, between Christianity and Hinduism.

7.1.1 Meaning of Salvation

The terms used in Christianity and Hinduism to mean salvation may be different but the meaning in which these terms are used appear to be similar. In the early part of the Old Testament, salvation is described as deliverance from outward sins like, disobedience of God's command, not following the Law, committing actions which are against their religious ritual and so on. This idea started with the first sin of disobedience committed in the Garden of Eden. The people of Israel whenever went against their covenant relation with their God, they believed that they had committed sin. Whenever they did not follow the religious rituals said in the Law (Torah) they believed that they had committed sin. So, they had to be saved from the bondage of such sins. In a similar way in the early part of the Vedas also salvation is explained as liberation from external sins. Sin is explained in the earlier Vedas
as an infringement of the cosmic law and truth Rta which includes moral law. But acts like telling lies, false swearing, not correctly performing the ritual of sacrifice are considered as sin in the earlier Vedas. Rig Veda I, 23 reads:

"What ever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have done, if I have lied or falsely sworn, waters, remove this stain from me!"3

In the later part of the Old Testament salvation is explained as liberation from the moral guilt of sin. It is a deeper understanding of sin. This idea of sin is very clearly explained in Psalm 51. In this psalm sin is explained as a deeper feeling in men, very much within man and not just in his outward action. Later, prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel explain this as salvation from sinfulness based on repentance. Similarly in the later Vedas especially in the Atharva Veda chapter VI, salvation is expected from a whole range of feeling like awareness of sin, guilt, anguish and repentence, forgiveness and purification. Vers. 96, 3 says:

"In whatever way we have sinned with our eyes or our minds or word, awake or asleep, may Soma by his own pure nature cleanse us!"4

Salvation is explained in a deeper sense in the New Testament The inwardness of the concept of salvation is emphasised in the New Testament. Salvation is used in the sense of liberation from the very nature of sin, that is

3 Translation given by Raimundo Panikkar, in The Vedic Experience Mantramanjari, p.486.

from the fallen state of man. It is used in the sense of restoration of man from the fallen state to his original state. It is explained as *soteria* in the sense, changing the whole nature of man, a renewal of life and a new creation altogether. In this usage the Christian concept of salvation means *mokṣa* in a very real and genuine sense. St. Paul says that in salvation experience, "What is mortal will be transformed by life. God is the one who has prepared us for this change, and he gave us his spirit as the guarantee of all that he has in store for us". Similarly a deeper understanding of salvation can be seen in the *Upanishads*. Here, it is an inward experience referred as self-realisation. Out of ignorance man is not able to realise his self and he is in an estranged or alienated condition. But when ignorance (*avidyā*) is removed man understands his original nature. This complete liberation from our bondage is referred in Hinduism as *mokṣa*. Dr. Radhakrishnan explains *mokṣa* as eternal life and he compares this with the Kingdom of God concept in Christianity.

St. Paul says very clearly in his writings that salvation means freedom from the baser nature of man that causes sin and death. God's spirit is in man, but man does not realise this because of his weakness of the baser nature (desire, lust). But when man overcomes this then he becomes the child of God. Of course the way to overcome this is to follow the way of Christ. Whereas salvation as liberation is explained in *Bagavad Gītā* as the release of the self from the bondage of desire caused by the *gunas* which are the baser nature of

5 *The Bible II Corinthians*, 5:4,5.
7 *The Bible*, Romans. 7 and 8.
man. Christianity may explain that the original nature of man is to be in the image of God in the sense of resembling God in our spirit or to be in fellowship with God or in the company of God. Whereas Hinduism may explain this as to become one with God, to be like God and to enjoy the fellowship of God. The Christian understanding of the nature of God-man relation in salvation is similar to the dualistic understanding of it in Hinduism. Though there may be some differences in the expressions of the meaning of salvation in Christianity and Hinduism, these two religions are similar in their understanding of the meaning of salvation as a total change in the whole personality of man.

Some of the contemporary thinkers of Christianity and Hinduism are also similar in their explanations of the meaning of the term salvation. Paul Tillich a contemporary Christian thinker explains salvation as a healing experience of the feeling of estrangement between God and man. He says that it is an experience of reunion of what is estranged, what is split and thus, "overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself". So, salvation is used by Tillich, in the sense of a healing of man's estrangement and making him new, restored to his original level. Sri Aurobindo a contemporary thinker in Hinduism feels that salvation is the ascension of the wholeman - matter, life and mind - into his original or essential level.

M.M. Thomas presents salvation as fullness of life, as liberation and as the ultimate. Fullness of life includes physiological aspects of life besides

the spiritual aspect; and liberation emphasises a freedom from dehumanising aspects of the world; and the ultimate means the spiritual growth of man. In Thomas' explanation salvation means an integration of physiological, psychological, sociological and spiritual aspects of human beings. So, the spiritual aspect of man is not in isolation but very much integrated to all other aspects of man. Radhakrishnan also uses the term salvation in the sense of reintegration of human nature. According to him human nature includes physiological, psychological, sociological and spiritual aspects. The spiritual aspect is often forgotten by man. So, Radhakrishnan feels that salvation is an experience which is revealing to man the spiritual nature of him and integrates that with the other aspects of his nature. M.M. Thomas talks about salvation as liberation from the dehumanising factors and Radhakrishnan explains that as liberation from depersonalising factors.

As a part of this study, to justify the title, an opinion survey was conducted among the followers of Christianity and Hinduism to find out their perception of the concept of salvation. A questionnaire structured by the researcher (Appendix-I) was administered to the respondents to elicit their opinion on the concept of salvation. A total of 102 respondents, 60 Christians and 42 Hindus, gave their opinion. One of the questions asked was - Is salvation meant for Humanisation, or Both? (Q No 2) The results (Appendix II) show that for this particular question the answer was; for Humanisation, from 45% of the Chrisitians and 52% of the Hindus, for Divinisation from 23% of the Christians and 17% of the Hindus, and for Both from 32% of the Christians and 31% of the Hindus. So it can be inferred that both Christians
and Hindus are almost similar in their understanding of the meaning of the concept of salvation.

7.1.2 Method of Salvation

Both Christianity and Hinduism strongly advocate religious or spiritual way as the only way of salvation. All the four thinkers included in this study also feel the same. Strict observance of religious practices including sacrifice, is considered to be the method of salvation both in the Vedas and in the earlier part of the Old Testament. In the Upanishads there is a change in the understanding of the method of salvation. G. Parrinder says, "In some of the Upanishads there is a tendency away from religious practice in the emphasis placed on knowledge. Reaction against mechanically performed sacrifices and prayers of the priests was understandable and, like some of the Old Testament prophets about the same time..."  

In the Upanishads meditation replaced worship and sacrifice as method of self-realisation. Contemplative method is suggested for liberation in the Upanishads. Similarly in the later Old Testament, prophets suggest an inward realisation, repentance than outward rituals.

Hans Staffner says, "Both the Gītā and the Gospel hold that man's salvation lies in his complete surrender to the God who loves him". He sights Matthew 22:37 and Bagavad Gītā 18.62 as examples. The Gospel says,

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9 G. Parrinder, Upanishads, Gītā and Bible, p.36.
10 Hans Staffner, S.J., Jesus Christ and the Hindu Community, p.171.
"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind", *Bagavad Gītā* says,

"In him alone seek refuge
With all thy being, all thy love;
And by his grace thou shalt attain
An eternal state, the all-highest peace".\(^{11}\)

So in Hinduism and Christianity the idea of love to God and love to fellow-beings is emphasised to gain salvation.

The Christian belief is that Christ is the only way of salvation. The logic behind this is that sin entered the world through one man-Adam and remission of sin is therefore through another man - Jesus Christ. So according to Christianity without Christ there is no salvation. But Hinduism does not believe in any separate saviour. According to Hindu belief, salvation can be achieved by man through his individual spiritual effort and with the grace of God. The grace of God in the process of salvation is emphasised very much in *Bagavad Gītā*, in Vaishnavism by the Tenkalai group and in *Vaishnavism* and in *Saiva Siddhānta*.

*Bagavad Gītā* says that God loves human beings and so his grace is in abundance for human beings God's grace is explained in the *Gītā* as very powerful, and it can break through the law of karma even. The *Gītā* 9:30 reads:

"However evil man's livelihood may be,
Let him but worship Me and love no other,
Then shall be he reckoned among the good, indeed,
For his resolve is right".\textsuperscript{12}

So, through such grace of God man gets salvation. When man surrenders to the Love of God, then God extends his grace to save man. The \textit{Gita} says in 18:64-66.

"I love thee well, Therefore I tell thee thy salvation
Give up all things of law, Turn to me, thine only refuge,
For I will deliver thee, From all evils; have no fear".\textsuperscript{13}

Thus it is very clear that \textit{Bagavad Gita} very strongly advocates the grace of God for salvation. It can be explained that God himself, through his grace, is presented as the saviour in \textit{Bagavad Gita}. This presentation is very close to the Christian way of salvation.

In Christianity also the love of God to humanity is emphasised more. The Bible says, "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that every one who believes in him may not die but have eternal life".\textsuperscript{14} So, the love of God is extended as grace to humanity in the form of Jesus Christ.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid}, p.148.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid}, pp.149, 150.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Bible}, John,
It can be explained that Christ is the personification of God's grace to mankind. Therefore salvation becomes possible to humanity through the grace of God as Jesus Christ. But in Hinduism there is no personification of the grace of God as the only one saviour. So on this point both these religions differ in their approaches and maintain their uniqueness. But on the point of grace of God in salvation there are similarities between Christianity and Hinduism.

In the Thenkalai group of Vaishnavism also the grace of God is emphasised more in the process of salvation. The cat-kitten model is given by them to stress the idea that the grace of God is more in the process of salvation as the mother cat's effort is more in the process of its carrying the young one. The Christian approach to the concept of salvation is very similar to the Thenkalai model of Vaishnavism.

In 'Saiva Siddhānta, the grace of God is given more importance than the effort of man in obtaining liberation or salvation. The divine grace operates at two levels in the process of salvation. The first one is the empirical stage or a lower stage where divine grace operates indirectly (triodhāna) through mala, māyā and karma and helps the individual to attain jñāna. The second one is the bliss level or higher level where, as P. Krishnan observes, "divine grace operates directly (anugraha) to grant release to the self, when the necessary condition of jñāna is achieved by the self through austere practice (tvam) - caryā, kriyā and yoga. In this mode of operation of divine grace, the initiative
comes solely from God". So according to this view, at the higher level of salvation it is God's grace only and not man's effort, but at the lower level it is man's effort with the grace of God.

All the four contemporary thinkers whose views on salvation are analysed in this study also accept the place of God's grace in the process of salvation. But they differ with one another in their explanations of this idea. Paul Tillich says that the grace of God is the basic factor in salvation. By grace, God has saved us and we have to accept the fact that we have been accepted by God. M.M. Thomas also subscribes to this view of giving importance to the grace of God in the process of salvation by saying that through Jesus Christ a total liberation for the whole humanity is worked out by God. Whereas Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan give full credit to man's effort in the process of liberation and mentions about God's intervention at the final stage. They are not denying God's role, but they emphasise more on the effort of man.

According to Sri Aurobindo at the final stage of the spiritual evolution of man, the soul receives the descent of the power from above - the Superconscience. This descent only is causing the supramental transformation which is explained as a total transmutation of our personality or liberation. But Radhakrishnan is not that explicit in his explanation of the intervention of the Supreme in the process of salvation of liberation. He says that at the final stage of samādhi the individual surrenders to the object and is absorbed

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by it. So, here the absorption is the work of the Supreme. This absorption is explained as the total identification or the union of the self with the Divine. This unitive experience, that happening, is explained by Radhakrishnan as, 'A lightening flash, a sudden flame of incandescence, throws a momentary but eternal gleam on life in time... The vision, the spark, the supreme moment of unification or conscious realization, sets the whole being along with perfect purpose". From this explanation of Radhakrishnan we can infer that he is also talking about the divine intervention at the final stage of man's spiritual ascension. On the whole, in Hinduism, man's effort in the process of salvation is given more importance. Whereas in Christianity God's effort is given more importance. But no doubt, both these religions accept that in the process of salvation man's effort and God's grace are meeting at some point or other.

The results of the opinion survey also reflect very clearly the difference between the Christian and the Hindu understanding of the role of God and man in the process of salvation. As response to the question (Q.No.8) - Is salvation due to self-effort, God's grace, Both? - 31% of the Hindus say it is due to self effort, whereas 13% of the Christians accept this as self-effort. But 55% of the Christians say it is due to grace of God. Whereas only 17% of the Hindus believe it as due to grace of God. 52% of the Hindus feel that salvation is due to both the effort of man and grace of God, whereas 32% of the Christians feel it that way. The results not only give a clear indication about the difference in the perception of God - man role in the concept of salvation in Christianity and Hinduism, but also give a clear indication about the present change in the

16 S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p.50.
perception of the concept of salvation among the followers of these two religions. In Christianity the traditional belief is that to give importance to the grace of God more in the process of salvation but as per the opinion survey 32% of them now accept that both God's grace and man's effort are there in the process of salvation. The traditional Hindu belief is to give more emphasis to man's effort in the process of salvation, but as per the opinion survey 52% of the Hindus now accept that both the effort of man and the grace of God are needed for salvation. So, the current trend in the understanding of the concept of salvation, in both these religions, is definitely different from the traditional understanding of it.

7.1.3 Significance of Salvation

The significance of the concept of salvation to the individual and to the society as explained in Christianity and Hinduism can be compared by understanding whether salvation is individualistic or universal, whether this can be achieved in this life itself or in the life after, whether salvation is confined to spiritual or religious sphere only or whether salvation has any relevance in the present day world and so on.

In the Vedas, salvation for certain type of people is denied and thus salvation is considered as a privilege to certain people only. This idea is similar to the Old Testament belief of salvation only to the chosen people. But later, in the Upanishads, especially in the Gītā, salvation for all idea is very clearly brought out. In this spiritual endeavour of salvation, as an individual only man progresses but when he attains salvation then he works for the salvation
of all. This idea prevails both in Christianity and Hinduism. Universal salvation, *sarvamukti*, salvation for all, is a common feature of these two religions.

In Hinduism we come across both the ideas of *jīvamukti* and *videhamukti*. In the *Upanishads* both the ideas are there, but in the *Gītā*, *jīvanmukti* is stressed. Shankara talks about *jīvanmukti* whereas Ramanuja emphasises *Videhamukti*. Madhva also believes in *Videhamukti*. But the Christian belief is salvation is in this life itself. Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan are of the firm opinion that salvation is possible in this life itself. The results of the opinion survey also indicate very clearly that around 65% of the respondents both Christians and Hindus, feel that salvation is possible in this life itself (Q.No.3).

The social significance of the concept of salvation is emphasised in Christianity and Hinduism. The Old Testament prophets like Amos, Hosea, Micah and others gave clarion call against inequality, injustice, oppression of the poor, corrupt form of living and such other evils in the society. They worked for the liberation of the whole society. Jesus Christ is another very good example. He worked for the liberation of the poor, the sick, the suffering, the oppressed and the needy. As individuals who have tasted salvation are supposed to love their neighbours, enemies even, to work for the salvation of others and the welfare of the humanity. Paul Tillich while explaining salvation as transformation by the New Being says that the power of the New Being completely transforms the individual and the community. The effect of salvation is extended to the society and the scope of salvation is widened to the
secular realm also. He talks about the formation of New humanity based on the spiritual experience of salvation.

Sri Aurobindo considers that the salvation experience is very significant to the individual because there is a complete transmutation of his nature. Through the spiritual power of evolution man becomes superman. Regarding the significance of man's salvation experience to the society, Aurobindo says that the liberated one continues to live in the society and work for the salvation of all. Liberation is complete only when the whole humanity is liberated. Through the liberated individuals the whole humanity can be elevated to clear knowledge and purified life. A new humanity, a spiritualised humanity which is envisaged by Sri Aurobindo is very similar to the explanation of New humanity by Paul Tillich. Both of them give more importance to spiritual action for the formation of the New humanity.

M.M. Thomas goes to the extent of saying that salvation is humanisation. Dehumanising aspects of the society like discriminations based on caste, race, nationality, religion, class and so on. Thomas feels secular humanism is also fighting against the dehumanising elements of the society, but it is not total, because the spiritual element of man is missing in this approach. This idea of Thomas is exactly similar to the religious or spiritual humanism of Radhakrishnan. The Christian mission according to Thomas is to join the struggle for human rights, social justice and world community. Thomas has a strong conviction that God is at work through Christ in the secular world and so those who believe that they are saved through the work of Christ also should extend their faith in social action and for the betterment
of the whole humanity. The New humanity envisaged by Thomas is based on social as well as spiritual action. Radhakrishnan also says that the experience of salvation changes the total nature of man and thus man realises his original nature. In this way salvation experience is very significant to an individual. This spiritual experience of man has its influence on the society also. As Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan also feels that the process of salvation is complete only when the whole humanity is saved. Hence the saved individuals or the liberated ones have to work for the salvation of others. To achieve this Radhakrishnan advocates ethical and social actions too. An outword expressions of the inward realisation of salvation is emphasised by him in social action. The liberated individuals have to work for the welfare of the whole world. To do this and thereby achieve the New humanity he has to fight against depersonalising aspects of society like, marginalising the underprivileged, discriminating some in the name of caste, race, religion and nationality. Radhakrishnan's method of approach to achieve the New humanity is mainly spiritual but it includes ethical and social action also.

In Christianity and Hinduism, the state of salvation is explained as a state of eternal life, bliss, happiness or perfect life. In Christianity this can be seen in the expression of the Kingdom of God and in Hinduism in the expression of *mokṣa*. The attainment of this state of eternal life, as per the current trend in Christianity and Hinduism, is here and now. In Hinduism there are different views. According to Shankara it is here and hereafter, but for Ramanuja and Madhva it is not here but hereafter only. Contemporary thinkers like Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan say it is here and now. But in
Christianity the Kingdom of God - eternal life - is and now but it extends to hereafter. Paul Tillich says it has started with Christ, but it is not confined to here but it is trans historical also. M.M. Thomas also says that the Kingdom of God is already inaugurated with Christ event and it continues after this life also.

Thus there are many such points of comparison with regard to the concept of salvation between Christianity and Hinduism. But still there are many other points on which these two religions maintain their separate uniqueness or individual identities.

7.2 CONCLUSION

Religion is meaningful and relevant even in the cyber-space age of today. It has undergone many changes over the years but still playing a vital role in the human society which is marching towards another millennium. Today man is living in an age of cloanning, scientific marvels and technological sophistications, but still he needs religion because science may provide him with all comforts but is not able to cater to the inner nature, the spiritual nature of man. Man is not a mere physical being, he is more than that, he has an inner being. Religion is catering to the need of the inner being or the spiritual being of man and so religion is relevant even today. But, religion which is supposed to be a unifying force does not appear to be so, some times, in our societies because of the narrow and wrong understanding of religion by some people. We are living in a multi-religious society to day and so a proper understanding of our own religion and others religions too is a must for our
peaceful co-existence. Comparative study of religions is an effective method to promote proper understanding of religions. Comparison of many aspects of religions is possible among religions and between religions. In the present study a comparison of the concept of salvation in Christianity and Hinduism has been attempted.

The concept of salvation is a major concept in religion and right from the ancient religious traditions till today the different dimensions of this concept have been emphasised at different points of time. In Assyro-Babylonian tradition salvation means an escape from the pains of hell and in Egyptian tradition it is an escape from the death and its consequences. In Iranian tradition salvation is deliverance from evil in this life and the securing of eternal happiness after death. Escape from suffering is viewed as salvation in Buddhist tradition and in Jaina tradition it is an escape from re-birth and in Islamic tradition it is an escape from the judgement of Allah.

In Christianity also the different dimensions of the concept of salvation has been emphasised at different points of time in the historical development. In the early part of the Old Testament salvation is explained as deliverance from bondage of slavery, sickness, famine and other such physical as well as social problems. But in the later part of the Old Testament salvation is presented as not only from social evils like injustice, lawlessness, ungodliness, but also from the sinful nature of humanity. So expressions like salvation from sin, salvation is the work of God are clearly emerging in the later part of the Old Testament only. Along with this the idea of Messiah is also expressed in
the later part of the Old Testament. This idea is further explained in the New Testament also.

Jesus Christ is seen as the Messiah in the New Testament, and gradually the concept of salvation is associated with eschatological belief. In the teachings of Jesus, salvation is expressed as forgiveness of sin, as a change in the whole nature of man, as the inheritance of the Kingdom of God and as a work already achieved by the Son of Man. The first Gospel emphasises the physical element more in salvation and also the Christ centeredness of salvation. In the second Gospel, salvation is explained as the spiritual, physical well being of people and Jesus is presented as the Son of Man, as a man of action who saves people from physical evils and sins. In the third Gospel salvation for all idea is given importance. Salvation as per this Gospel means new life, wholeness of human being, forgiveness of sins and healing of the sick. Jesus is presented as the giver of new life to all, the poor, the meek and the weak. The fourth Gospel explains salvation as the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is for the whole universe and it has already started with Jesus Christ. For Paul salvation is deliverance from sin with the mediation of Jesus Christ. He says that salvation is already made by God out of his grace, through Jesus Christ and so it is a past event. If man believes this and internalise it then it becomes a present reality and the fullness of salvation can be experienced in the life after and so it becomes a future hope of man.

In the early Christian thinking salvation was extended to all. During this time intellectual approach to Christian concepts started emerging. To Clement higher form of salvation could be attained through correct knowledge
of God. For Origen salvation meant the restoration of man to a realm of pure
spirit. Tertullian and Augustine emphasised the grace of God more in the
process of salvation. Scholastic approach to Christian doctrines was much in
use during the medieval period. Anselm and Thomas Aquinas tried to relate
reason and faith in their approaches to this concept of salvation. In the later
middle ages Christian thinking was very much focused at the individual
salvation from sin. The very approach to the concept of salvation was more
intellectualistic and scholastic. Then during the Reformation and after further
new interpretations of the concept of salvation came into existence. Martin
Luther gave importance to grace of God in salvation and man's faith in
accepting it. John Calvin thought that salvation was completely the work of
God and man was elected to salvation by the grace of God. In John Wesley's
explanation salvation gained social dimension also. In Roman Catholicism
during this time salvation was given a human touch and salvation by work
gained more importance. In the modern period due to the influence of many
isms and the great wars, the idea of humanistic approach to the concept of
salvation had dawned upon many thinkers. Thus humanistic and social
dimensions gained importance in the understanding of the concept of salvation
during the modern period.

In the contemporary world the concept of salvation has gained new
meaning and relevance. Paul Tillich, a contemporary Christian thinker,
explains salvation as healing of the estrangement between God and man and
man and his fellow beings. This explanation of salvation by Tillich is more
relevant to the present context because it becomes a healing touch to the
humanity which is estranged within itself in the name of class, race, religion, language, culture and many other similar things. Tillich presents his idea of salvation in three folds such as salvation as participation in the New Being or Regeneration; as acceptance of the New Being and Justification and as transformation by the New Being or Sanctification. According to Paul Tillich all can participate in the New Being that is Christ and thus become new creature. Inspite of man being a sinner, God, because of his grace, has made salvation ready for man through Jesus Christ and man has to accept in faith that he has been accepted by God. The power of the New Being completely transforms not only the individuals but also the community. When Paul Tillich says that salvation as transformation is extended to the entire humanity, he is giving a new meaning and relevance to the concept of salvation. According to Tillich the state of salvation is the inheritance of the Kingdom of God which has already been started with the New Being - Christ, and the Kingdom of God experience in trans-historical also. Thus Paul Tillich gives a concrete shape to the christian understanding of the Kingdom of God which is the state of salvation.

M.M. Thomas, a contemporary Indian Christian thinker, describes salvation as wholeness or fullness of being in the sense of fulfillment of physiological and psychological needs; liberation from all oppressions like, injustice, poverty, disease and so on; and as the spiritual ultimate to realise the Kingdom of God. Thomas gives a clear expression to his idea of salvation by relating it to the idea of humanisation. Salvation experience is liberating humanity from the dehumanising factors like caste, class, racial and other
such differences. Christ as a true man has already set a model for us to work in a definite direction. So, Thomas feels that we can also do the same and establish a new humanity which is already started with Jesus Christ. Thus Thomas is relating the secular and the spiritual. His expression of salvation as humanisation is the historical destiny and salvation as spiritual is the ultimate destiny of man is very appealing to modern man. The ultimate destiny of man according to Thomas is realising the Kingdom of God, which is already established on earth by Jesus Christ. The realisation of the Kingdom of God is linked to social action in Thomas's explanation. This really gives a practical understanding to the idea of Kingdom of God.

Thus the concept of salvation in Christianity has gained different expressions at different points of time. The views of contemporary Christian thinkers like Paul Tillich and M.M. Thomas also clearly show that there is a change in the present understanding of the concept of salvation. The change is towards an emphasis of human and social dimensions in the concept of salvation. The spiritual experience of salvation is expected to be expressed in social action and this is really a welcome trend. The results of the opinion survey also very clearly indicate that there is change in the understanding of the concept of salvation according to the changing world order (Q.No.16). 70% of the Christian respondents have given such an opinion. A change in the understanding of the concept of salvation that becomes visible through this opinion survey is the understanding of salvation as humanisation. 48% of the Christians say that salvation is meant for humanisation (Q.No.2), and 32% of them say it is for both humanisation and divinisation. So, the trend is towards
humanisation only. Though majority (58%) of the contemporary Christians feel that salvation is a religious phenomenon (Q.No.9), based on a correlation of their responses to Questions 2 and 9, it can be inferred that salvation is a religious phenomenon which includes humanisation. What we get out of this inference is nothing but the religions humanism idea expressed by Radhakrishnan and M.M. Thomas.

So, the current trend in the concept of salvation in Christianity is to understand this in a new sense. Today salvation is understood in a broad sense which could include the physiological, psychological, sociological and spiritual aspects of man. The religious process of salvation is not isolated from the social activities. In fact, the trend now is to integrate the secular and spiritual aspects of man.

In Hinduism the concept of salvation is understood as liberation, *mukti* or *mokṣa*. In the earlier *vedas* salvation is referred as, purification from sins like, going against cosmic law and moral law; escape from punishment with the help of the grace of God, and attain eternal happiness. To be saved one has to do the religious rituals of worship and sacrifice. In the later *vedas* salvation is understood in a deeper sense. Salvation is, liberation from the guilt of man and the enjoyment of the bliss of heaven. This is explained as the ultimate destiny of man. To achieve this man has to repent for his sins, ask for forgiveness and offer sacrifice and oblation. Then by the grace of God man will be saved. In the *Upanishads* a more philosophical explanation of the concept of salvation is given. The self is explained to be in *avidyā* or ignorance and because of this the self is not able to understand that it is Brahman. When
avidyā is removed by higher knowledge, the self realises its true nature. This self-realisation of the self can be achieved through internal spiritual exercise and not through external ceremonies. Knowledge - jñāna is mentioned as the supreme means of salvation or liberation. The ultimate destiny of man can be achieved in this life or after this life. Thus the approach to the concept of salvation in the Upanishads is individualistic and philosophical. Where as in Bagavad Gītā the concept of salvation is given religious expressions in the form of bhakti and practical orientation in the sense of doing ones duty. But in the Dharshanas a higher philosophical interpretations are given to the concept of salvation.

Salvation means to Shankara, removal of ignorance - Avidyā by knowledge - Vidyā. The knowledge is that Brahman is the only Reality and the individual is not different from Brahman. Shankara accepts liberation in this life and the final liberation after this life. To Ramanuja, the release from the barriers of ignorance and karma is known as salvation or mokṣa. Salvation can be achieved through right knowledge, which can be obtained through higher bhakti which involves total surrender to God and the grace of God. Ramanuja believes that liberation is possible only in the life after. In Ramanuja’s view, salvation does not mean the merging of the self with the Absolute, but it is a realisation of the soul of its essence that it is similar to Brahman. Salvation is referred as liberation from the past karma by Madhva, and he considers bhakti as the only means of liberation. According to his salvation does not ensure souls being one with God but it is the enjoyment of the fellowship of God or nearness of God and this is possible only after this life. During the
period of religious reformation in Hinduism, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayananda emphasised the importance of the social dimension of religion and this had its telling effect on the understanding of the concept of salvation in their time and later also. During the period religious renaissance in Hinduism, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda explained the significance of service to humanity as a spiritual exercise in the process of God - realisation. Such a practical and humanistic understanding of salvation given by thinkers like Vivekananda is further developed by the contemporary thinkers in Hinduism.

Among the contemporary thinkers, Sri Aurobindo explains salvation as the total transformation of the human nature from lower level to its original level. It is a liberation from desire, ignorance, ego and the baser nature of man and a spiritual ascension to the divine life. *Integral Yoga* is the method suggested by him for the spiritual evolution. Salvation according to him is not only personal but also the integral transformation of the whole mankind and thus salvation becomes complete and then only the Divine life an earth is accomplished. This is a very meaningful approach to the concept of salvation. Sri Aurobindo's method of approach - integral yoga - to salvation is a wholesome approach because it transforms the whole of man's being - spiritual, mental, vital and physical. A very important point in this approach is that both spirit and matter are integrated in a perfect fashion. His approach is to spiritualise all matter and divinise all life on earth. Sri Aurobindo's approach to salvation is a very balanced one because there is a perfect harmony of knowledge, love and work is in this approach. Sri Aurobindo's explanation of this concept of salvation may sound metaphysical but on the whole it is a very
humanistic and a practical one. Salvation according to Radhakrishnan is the realisation of the true nature, that is the spiritual nature, of man. It is a liberation from the bondage of illusion and ignorance and achieving the ultimate destiny of man. Radhakrishnan advocates a religious way of salvation which includes purification, concentration and identification. It is no doubt a highly spiritual and contemplative experience. But Radhakrishnan feels that this experience of salvation does not stop with the contemplative realisation level only, it is expressed in social action also. Like Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan also explains the point that the ultimate destiny is not individual salvation but universal salvation. To achieve this all the liberated individuals with transformed nature ceaselessly work for the liberation of others. This explanation of Radhakrishnan makes the whole idea of religion more meaningful, useful and relevant.

Thus the emphasis on the meaning of salvation has been changing from time to time right from the period of vedas to the present day. Salvation was viewed as eternal happiness, self-realisation, union with God and so on. Today salvation is understood as the realisation of the true nature of man and the process accepted to achieve this is the religious way which includes social action and spiritual humanism. The results of the opinion survey also reflect the same trend. As per the survey, 52% of the Hindus say that salvation is meant for humanisation and 31% say it is both humanisation and divinisation. So the opinion among contemporary Hindus is that salvation is meant for humanisation. 67% of them say that salvation is attainable in this life itself (Q.No.3). This shows very clearly that the contemporary followers of Hinduism
have a practical understanding of the concept of salvation. But when it comes to the question of, whether salvation is a social phenomenon, religious phenomenon or both? (Q.No.9), 38% of the Hindus say it is a religious phenomenon only and an equal percentage of them feel that it is both religious and social. So, the interpretation can be that though the contemporary Hindus feel that salvation is a religious phenomenon there is a growing awareness among Hindus today to view salvation as religious as well as a social phenomenon. A similar trend is seen in the understanding of the aim of salvation as individualisation and socialisation (Q.No.10). An equal percentage (38%) of the contemporary followers of Hinduism say that it is individualisation, and individualisation as well as socialisation. To a question - Does salvation enhance the spiritual life, materialistic life, social life, and all these (Q.No.13) - 45% of the Hindus say that salvation enhances spiritual, social as well as materialistic life of an individual. This result establishes very clearly that the current trend in the perception of salvation among the Hindus is to view salvation as an experience which would transform the whole life of man, which would bring about an overall development of man. This is also a good trend. A clear indication that is derived from the opinion survey is that 62% of the followers of Hinduism today, believe that there is change in the general perception of the concept of salvation in accordance with the changing world order (Q. No.16).

Thus it can be concluded that in the historical development of both Christianity and Hinduism there had been changes in the emphasis of the meaning of salvation from time to time. In the present also there are welcome
changes in the understanding of the concept of salvation in Christianity and Hinduism. In the contemporary world the general trend in the understanding of the concept of salvation in both Christianity and Hinduism is towards making this concept more relevant, meaningful to the modern man by broadening the understanding of this concept and extending the very reach of this concept. The present trend is towards secularising this concept in the sense of including social action also in the process of salvation. Today the meaning of salvation is to liberate humanity from dehumanising and depersonalizing factors of society. The contemporary trend is to emphasise the salvation of the whole humanity more than individual salvation and realisation of the ultimate destiny of man in this life itself. In all these aspects both these religions have almost similar views only. Likewise in the explanation of the meaning of the concept of salvation as liberation from sin or bondage, a complete change in the whole nature of man, a realisation of the true nature of man and in many such ideas similarities can be seen. In some methods of salvation like, considering religious way or the spiritual way as the only way of salvation, giving importance to the grace of God in the process of salvation, or considering the effort of man as well as the grace of God in the process of salvation, comparisons between Hinduism and Christianity are possible. In explaining the significance of the concept of salvation to the individual and to the society, both Christianity and Hinduism have many similar ideas like emphasising salvation for the whole humanity, including social action in salvation, emphasising the transformations of the whole personality the whole life of the individual by taking care of both the physical and spiritual aspects of man. But in accepting some concepts like a separate saviour, the atoning act
of Christ and such related aspects to the concept of salvation these two religions maintain their individualities or uniqueness. Taking into consideration all these facts, just to facilitate a better understanding of these two religions and to promote harmony among the followers of these two religions, similar comparisons where ever possible can be encouraged between Christianity and Hinduism. Dialogue of religions is another effective method of comparative study of religions and this can also be attempted for better understanding of religions. One World Religion may be too ambitious to achieve, but religiously pluralistic societies co-existing peacefully as one World Community can be achieved through such comparative studies of religion.