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Q No: 01

What is Anthropological definition of Religion and its major functions? Also discuss how the primitive Religion evolved?

(1)

Introduction: Brief Overview on the Concept of Religion and its evolution:

"Religion functions to provide emotional support when rational knowledge fails."

— B. Malinowski —

The words of B. Malinowski affirm perfectly, it is the religion which provides psychological and emotional support to its followers.

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when rational ability fails to provide
relaxment to the mind. If we elucidate
the basic concept of religion, it is set of
beliefs which provide emotional and inner
support. Over and above, the concept of
religion passes through transformational
phases and evolves through various forms,
including animism to monotheism. Different
anthropologists have deeply researched
about the evolution of religion. Each
anthropologist observes different function
of religion, which leaves far-reaching
implications on the mind of its followers.

(2)

Understanding the definition of Religion in the lens of anthropology:

According to E. B Tylor

"Religion is the belief
in natural powers".

— Primitive culture —

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while Clifford Geertz believe,

"Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, long lasting moods and motivations in men formulating conceptions of general order of existence."

— Religion as cultural system —

(3)

Overview on the functions of Religion:

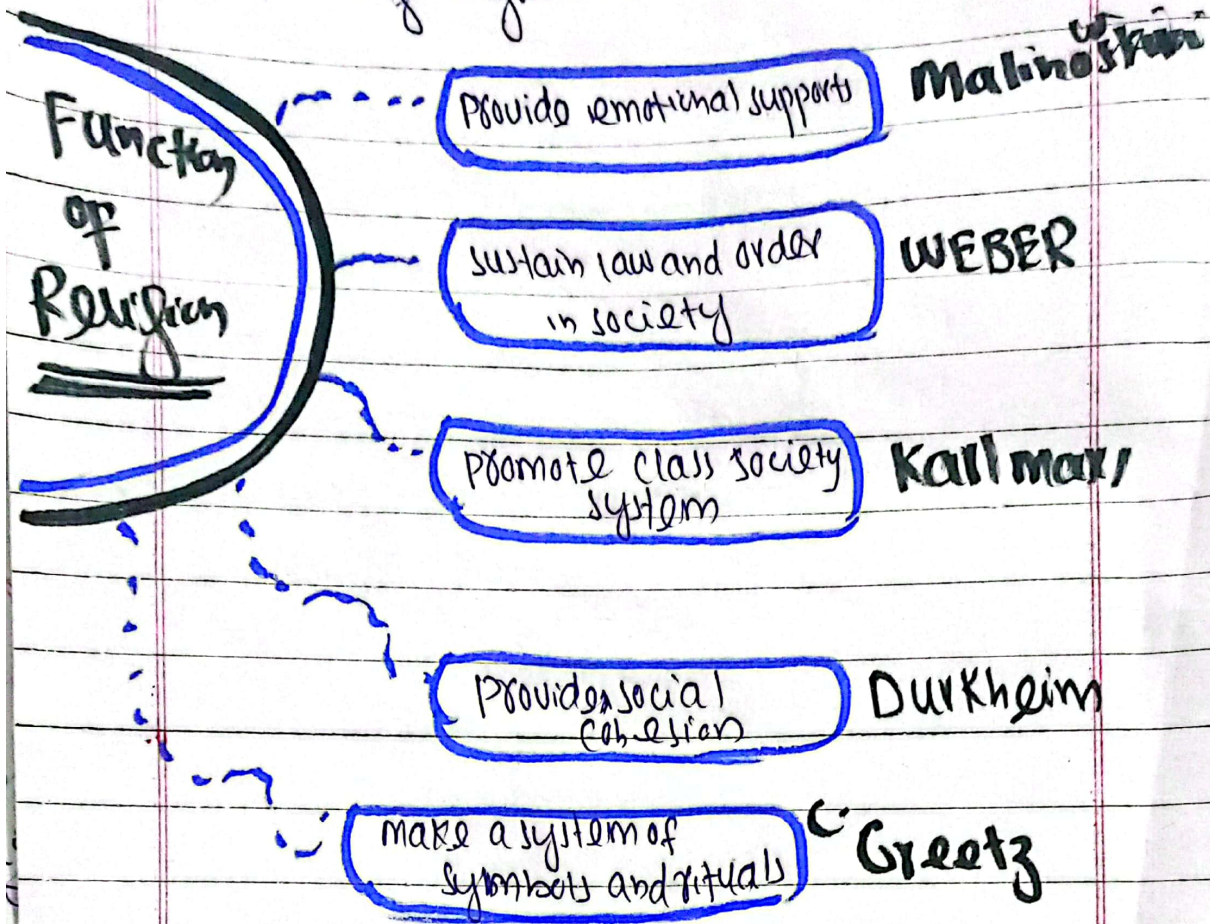
Religion has the power to provide all those supports to its followers which rational knowledge cannot.

Religion is the source which puts check and balance on its followers, resulting in social stability. To

understand the basic function of Religion the

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following diagram need to be observed.



(i) Religion provides emotion support:

Malinowski discussed that religion provides emotional and psychological belief to its followers.

Case study:

Tobriand Islander

prayed before deep-fishing to avoid any bad outcomes.

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(ii)

Religion sustains law and order in society:

Weber observed that religion is the source which helps to make society sustain.

Case Study:

Islamic Shariah law in Saudi Arabia

is used to sustain peace and sustainability in society.

(iii)

Religion promotes class society

"Religion is the opium of the people"

Karl Marx.

Karl Marx believed, it is the religion which acts as a opium and sustain the order of elite society. Thus, religion is responsible to make class societies, leading to oppression.

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Case in Point

Catholic Churches
before French
Revolution.

(iv)

Religion provides
social cohesion.

Durkheim (Totemism and social function
of Religion) explained that different
clans worshipped sacred symbols
that represented collective identity.

Case in Point:

Australian Aboriginal
Tribe practiced
totemic rituals where

each clans have sacred totem animal.

(v)

Religion makes system
of symbols and rituals.

Religion makes rituals and symbols.

Each ritual and symbol represents

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Some kind of different belief. Additionally, each symbol and ritual has different meaning in different religion.

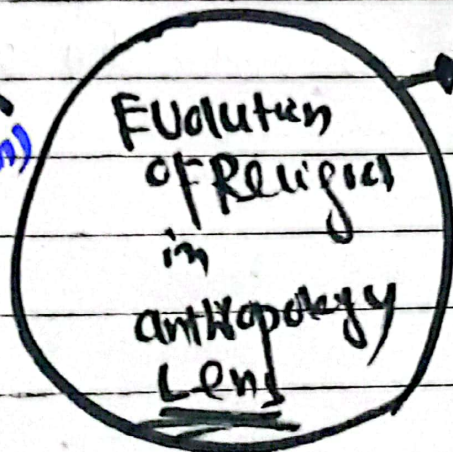
For Example

Cross - sign in Christianity has different meaning for describing their belief towards it.

(4)

Discussing the anthropologist observations over the evolution of religion.

Emil
Durkheim
(Totemism)



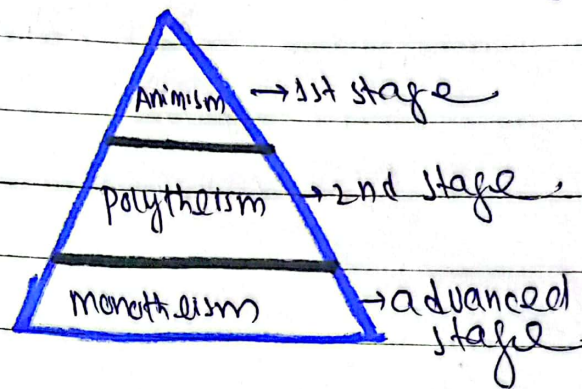
E.B Tylor
(Animism)

Bronislaw Malinowski
(Functionalism)

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(i)
**E.B Tylor Animism theory
regarding religion
evolution:**

E.B Tylor in his book primitive culture explained that religion evolution first stage is Animism, later it is evolved in different stages.



E.B Tylor argued that during first stage human observing dream, and death; believed in dual existence.

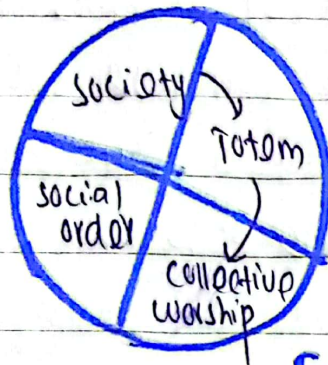
As per E.B Tylor:

"
It, First step towards
religion though was
animism".

(ii)
**Emile Durkheim stance over
religion evolution:**

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Religion originated in totemism, where different clans worshipped sacred totem to represent collective identity.



Ex: Namaz
in Islam

(iii)

**B. Malinowski observation
over the evolution of
Religion:**

Religion provides psychological comfort in the time of uncertainty. Hence, when the people feel uncertain, they started to find a place where they found relaxation of mind.

Example Dobryander.

The B. Malinowski concluded that religion evolved in societies to get psychological satisfaction.

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(5)

Conclusion

Religion is a complex phenomena. It evolved through various primitive societies and reaches to advanced form such as monotheism. These observations were discussed by various anthropologists and each found different results.