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# Anthropology

## Part - II

### Question no : 04

Analyze how evolutionism shaped early anthropological thought and discuss its major limitations. critically examine the concept of culture as 'text'.

#### 1- Introduction:

Early anthropology was deeply influenced by the idea of evolutionism, which sought to explain the development of human societies over time. Anthropologists attempted to classify societies from 'primitive' to civilized based on technological, social and religious advancements. This framework shaped the study of culture, religion, economy

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and political organization. Later, anthropologists introduced the concept of culture as a "text" suggesting that cultural practices should be interpreted like a story to uncover underlying meanings and social values.

## II- Early Anthropological Evolutionism:

### 1) Socio-cultural evolution by Henry Morgan:

He proposed a unilineal model of social evolution, dividing societies into three stages:

savagery

Barbarism

civilization.

He linked technological innovations such as use of fire, pottery, writing with social and moral development.

### 2) Cultural circle theory (Diffusionism):

Friedrich Ratzel argued that cultural traits spread from one society to another. This theory emphasizes

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on borrowing and diffusion rather than independent invention, suggesting that cultures influence each other over time.

### 3) Phyletic Gradualism (Biological perspective):

It suggests that species evolve slowly and continuously over long periods through the gradual accumulation of small genetic changes.

Also applied to culture, it means societies develop steadily.

### 4) Punctual equilibrium (Biological perspective):

proposes that species remain relatively stable for long periods, with rapid evolutionary change occurring in short bursts often due to environmental pressures.

Similarly, in cultural evolution, societies may experience sudden, rapid change, after technological, political or environmental disruption.

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### 5) Animism, Manaism, Animatism:

E.B Taylor and James Frazer, studied religion as an evolving phenomenon.

1) Animism: Fear let the belief in spirits

2) Manaism: supernatural force that exist in people, objects or nature

3) Animatism: Impersonal supernatural force.

These stage were thought to reflect the intellectual evolution of humanity.

### 6) Social organizations:

1) Bands: small egalitarian group

2) Tribes: larger- kinbased organization

3) chiefdoms: centralized leadership, with social ranking.

4) States: formal governance with legal system.

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## 7) Economic exchange:

1) **Barter**: Direct exchange of goods and services

2) **Reciprocity**: Mutual exchange of goods

**Kula ring case study (Malinowski)**  
Toribriand Island

3) **Currency**: Paper money - coins

4) **Digital currency**: Bit-coins

## III- Major Limitations of Evolutionism:

1) **Ethnocentrism**: Non western societies were judged against western standards of civilization

2) **Over simplification**: Assumed all societies follow same linear path, ignoring cultural diversity

3) **Neglect of historical context**: Did not consider specific historical, environmental

or political factors affecting societies

#### IV. Culture as a 'Text':

Later anthropologists, notably Clifford Geertz, shifted focus from evolution to interpretation. He proposed his theory 'Thick description' highlighting culture could be read like a text where rituals, symbols and practices communicate social meanings

#### Examples:

##### 1) Balinese Cockfight:

Symbolic meaning of status, masculinity and community relationship

##### 2) Cargo system:

Social hierarchy, religious obligation

##### 3) Potlatch:

not only generosity but prestige and status

##### 4) Kula ring:

not only exchange of goods but creates social alliance

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## V- Critical Examination of culture as 'Text'

### Strengths

### Limitations

- |                                                           |                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) highlights interpretive and symbolic nature of culture | can overlook material conditions and structural inequalities |
| 2) Avoids ethnocentric approach                           | Risk of over-interpretation                                  |

## VI- Conclusion:

Early evolutionism shaped anthropology by emphasizing systematic study of cultural change, social organizations, and religious beliefs. However, its ethnocentric and linear assumptions limited its explanatory power. The later approach of culture viewed as a text shifted the attention to interpretation, symbols and meanings, providing richer understanding of human societies.

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## Question no: 03

Compare Talal Asad's views on religion with Clifford Geertz's symbolic approach..... secularism?

### I- Introduction:

Anthropologists have long sought to understand religion not just as belief, but as a social and cultural phenomenon. Two influential thinkers in this field are Clifford Geertz and Talal Asad. G. Geertz emphasized religion as a system of symbols that give meaning to human life. Asad critiqued this symbolic approach and examined how religion is deeply intertwined with power, politics and secularism. These perspectives build understandings about how religion shapes and is shaped by social, political and cultural contexts.

### II- Talal Asad and Secularism:

Talal Asad's work focuses on the relationship between religion and

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secularism. He explains that secularism is not a neutral space where religion and politics are separate; instead, it is historically and politically constructed. In his view, modern secular societies define what counts as 'religion' in ways that often privilege certain practices while marginalizing others.

### For example:

Some western countries "Praying" in schools may be restricted not because "religion is bad" but because secular laws define religion in a particular and institutionalized way.

## III- Key Features of Talal Asad's Approach:

### 1) Religion is socially and culturally constructed:

In his view, religion is shaped by laws, institutions and cultural practices not just a personal belief.

### 2) Link with power:

Religious practices are influenced by

state, discipline and governance.

### 3) Critique of Western secularism:

Secularism is not simply a separation from religion but a framework that governs which religious behaviours are acceptable in public life.

## IV. Reshaping Boundaries between religion and politics:

Asad challenges the strict separation between religion and politics that is often assumed in western thought. He argues that religion and politics are inseparable, because state power often defines and regulates religious practices.

### Example:

Islamic law influences family law, banking and holidays in Islamic countries.

Debates on hijab, prayer and halal food in secular countries.

## V. Clifford Geertz's Symbolic approach:

Clifford Geertz views religion primarily as a system of symbols that gives meaning to human experience. Religion provides a moral framework and explains the purpose of life. Unlike Asad, Geertz focuses more on cultural meaning than political power.

### Example:

- 1) A christian lighting a candle in church
- 2) Hindu performing Puja

These gestures connect them to larger moral orders.

## VII. Key Features of Geertz's Approach:

- 1) Religion is a cultural system of symbols.
- 2) Symbols give meaning to human experience and motivate actions
- 3) Focuses on understanding the internal logic of beliefs rather than power

### VII Comparative Analysis:

| Aspect          | Talal Asad                            | Clifford Geertz                     |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Focus        | Power, law, politics<br>secularism    | Symbols, meaning<br>culture         |
| 2) Approach     | Political, critical                   | Interpretive<br>symbolic            |
| 3) Religion     | socially regulated<br>and constructed | Provides moral<br>order and meaning |
| 4) Secularism   | Not neutral,<br>shapes religion       | Less emphasis                       |
| 5) Daily impact | law state,<br>public space            | Rituals,<br>Personal understanding  |

### VIII- Conclusion:

Talal Asad and Clifford Geertz offer complementary perspectives on religion. Geertz emphasizes meanings and symbols, while Asad emphasizes power, secularism and politics. By examining religion through Asad's lens, we can better understand

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understand modern debates about religious freedom, secular, law and public life. Everyday practices from wearing religious attire to observing rituals, illustrate that religion is both personal and political, making Asad's insight highly relevant in contemporary society.

## Question no: 07

Discuss anthropology's relevance and contribution in understanding globalization and public policy formulation.

### 1- Introduction

Anthropology, the scientific study of human societies and culture, provides critical insights into the complexities of human life. In an era of globalization, where cultural, economic and political systems are increasingly interconnected, anthropology helps analyze the global forces impact on cultures, economies and social structures. Moreover, it provides

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insights that are critical for public policy formation, ensuring policies are inclusive and effective in diverse contexts.

## II- Relevance of Anthropology in Understanding Globalization

### 1) Cultural Relevance:

Anthropology emphasizes understanding cultures in their own terms through following tools.

i) Ethnography: In depth study of daily life

ii) Ethnology: Comparative study of culture

iii) Emic : Insider's perspective

iv) Etic : Outsider's perspective of culture

These tools allow to analyze how globalization affect cultural practices.

## 2) Economic Relevance:

Anthropologists study the evolution of economic systems such as,

Bartee

Reciprocity

Redistribution

Industrialization

Surplus, which provides insights to global trade and economic policies affect local people. They also understand economic institutions

Banks and

Trade networks to analyze the impacts of globalization on economies.

## 3) Societal Relevance:

Globalization transforms social structures from hunting-gathering societies to agricultural, industrial and post industrial societies. Anthropologists study the impact of these transitions on

Family structure

Migration patterns

Health

urbanization

### III- Contribution to public policy making:

#### 1) Gender inclusivity:

Anthropological research highlights gender roles, inequalities, and social norms to create a gender inclusive policy.

Example: Microfinancing Programs in Bangladesh

#### 2) Politics:

Understanding local political dynamics, power structures and social hierarchies, allows policy makers to design inclusive governance framework.

Example: Pakistan's Federal model or  
Integrative policies in  
multi-ethnic regions

#### 3) Social Science:

Social science perspective blends knowledge about culture, society and human behaviour.

Example: Resistance to COVID vaccination  
in South Asian regions

#### 4) Geographic:

Anthropologists study human environment helping policy makers implement context specific strategies.

**Example:** Disaster management programs in Rural areas of Baluchistan and Sindh.

#### 5) Education:

Anthropology examines cultural attitudes towards education.

**Example:** Bilingual education programs in Sindh and Baluchistan.

#### 6) Environment:

Anthropological research informs sustainable environmental policies.

**Example:** Water conservation  
Reforestation

#### 7) Economic institutions:

Analyzes local economic practices.

**Example:** Hand embroidery industry in rural regions  
Agrarian economy. incentives

and microfinancing

### 8) Technology:

Assesses societal responses to new technologies to ensure effective adoption.

**Example:** Telemedicine services for rural areas.

## IV. Conclusion:

Anthropology plays a crucial role in understanding globalization and shaping public policy. Its insights ensure that policies are culturally sensitive, economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. By bridging global processes with local realities, anthropology contributes to effective, equitable and sustainable policies that respect human diversity and societal complexity.

## Question no: 08

Write short notes on followings

### (a) Participant observation

#### 1) Definition:

A qualitative research method in which the researchers participate in daily activity observing behaviours, interaction and customs.

#### 2) Purpose: To gain Emic perspective Understand cultural practice by living in culture rather than just relying on reports.

#### 3) Example:

Malinowski living among  
Trobriand Island  
"Kula exchange"

#### 4) Advantage: Provides rich and in-depth data

#### 5) Challenges: Time consuming Researchers bias

## (b) Ethnography

### 1) Definition:

A comprehensive written account of a culture or social group, derived from field work, often combining observation, interviews, and participation.

### 2) Purpose:

To document  
To analyze  
To interpret social life including customs, rituals, economy, politics and religion.

### 3) Example:

Detailed Trobriand Islander's trade, kinship and ritual kin practices by Malinowski.

### 4) Characteristics:

Focuses on

holistic understanding

Descriptive

Interpretive

capturing both behavior and meaning

## (c) Key Informants

### 1) Definition:

A person within a community who has detailed knowledge about cultural practices, social norms, history, or language.

### 2) Role in research:

Provides

- i) Guidance
- ii) Explanation
- iii) access

to local knowledge that may not be apparent through observation alone

### 3) Example:

A village elder explaining

- i) Lineage
  - ii) Ceremonies
  - iii) Dispute resolution
- to an anthropologist

### 4) Importance:

Prevents misunderstanding  
encourages accurate insight

## (d) Genealogical Method

### 1) Definition:

A systematic technique to record kinship, family ties, and social relationships within a community.

### 2) Purpose:

To understand

- i/ social organization
- ii/ inheritance
- iii/ marriage rules
- iv/ Political alliance

specifically in societies where kinship is central.

### 3) Tools:

Family trees  
diagrams showing marriage  
charts lineage

### 4) Example: Using genealogical charts in tribal societies to study clan relationships.

### 5) Significance: helps in analyzing

power  
cooperation  
conflict

within community.

