

Question No 3

1) Introduction:

Religion has been one of the significant topic of modern as well as ancient of Anthropology. There are number of Theories which explains the origin of religion, and how it is expanded. Religion is basically defined as the set of beliefs, myths and facts associated with any entity. These set of beliefs significantly impacts on human life. In modern Anthropology, religion has been long debated topic and Anthropologist of every time has given different theories on the origin and propagation of religion. Among them Talal Asad and Clifford Geertz has also given an opposing views on religion. Talal Asad has done objective participant in Al-Azhar University at Egypt. After 8 years of

objective participation, he gave the theory on religion and rejected Clifford Geertz theory.

Comparison on Talal Asad's View and Clifford Geertz Symbolic Approach

Talal Asad	Clifford Geertz
• A historically produced tradition which is shaped by power relations, authority and discipline	★ Religion as a cultural system and provides through meaning symbols, rituals, myths and beliefs.
• Religious meaning are shaped by colonialism, and political institution	★ Religion across cultures, functions similarly as a symbolic system

Clifford Geertz Symbolic Approach

According to Clifford Geertz Religion is symbolic and a cultural system which provides meaning symbols

rituals and beliefs to people, even people from across culture, believes in religion in the same manner. Clifford Geertz understand religion just a cultural practice without digging deep about its origin.

1) ~~Talal Asad's View on Religion~~

In contrast to Clifford Geertz Talal Asad gave his views on the origin of Religion. Talal Asad, a modern Anthropologist, gave this theory after 8 years of participant observation at Al-Azhar University.

4.1 Rejects the idea of Clifford Geertz's Universal definition of Religion

Talal Asad rejected the idea of Clifford Geertz's universal definition while giving the counter arguments that religion is ~~not~~ something very superficial but it is related with history, textual interpretation and politics.

Religion is shaped by
State Power,

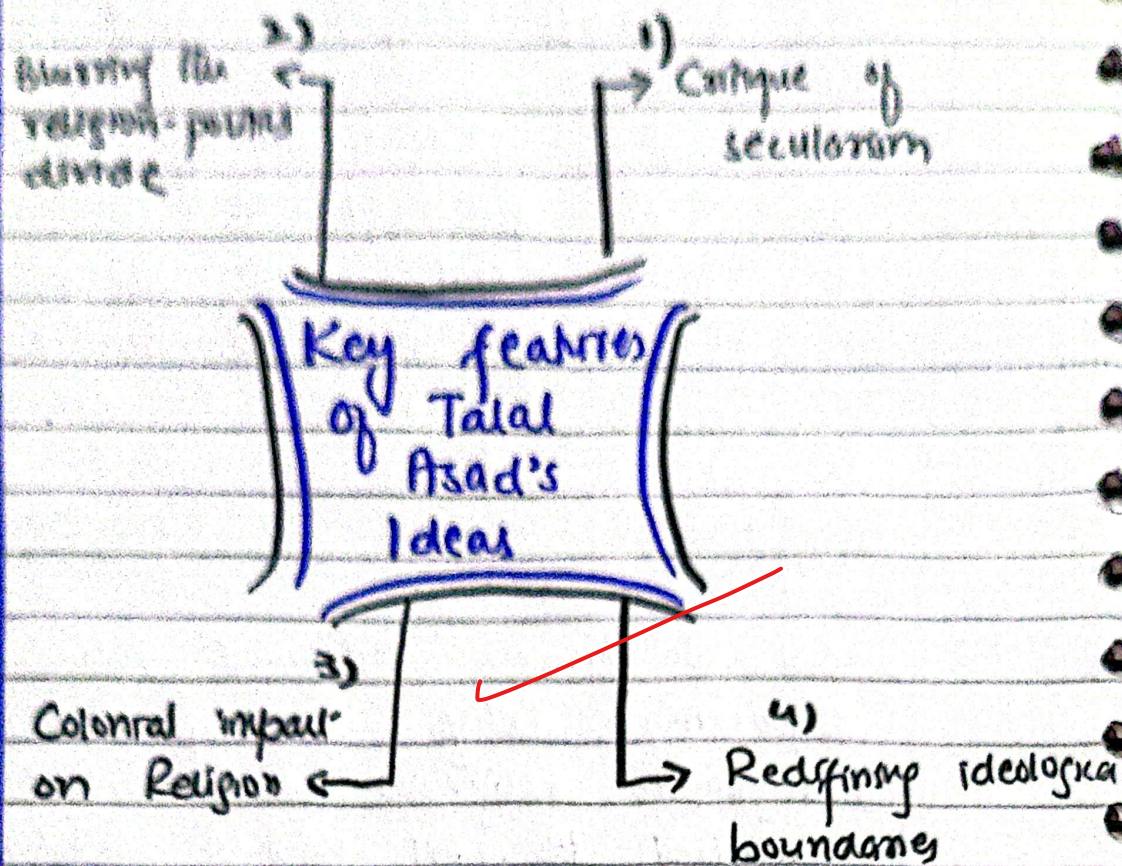
Religion is also shaped by
state powers, authorities play a
significant role in touching religion
according to own interests.

4.3 Historical roots cannot be
Overlooked

On the contrary of Clifford
Geertz, Talal Asad more
likely to connect with Genealogical
roots of any issue or topic.
Talal Asad argues that the only
contemporary views on any topic
can ~~mislead~~ the people.
One has to identify the core
issue from past.

5) How Talal Asad Reshapes
Religion, Secularism, and
Politics.

Talal Asad challenges the assumed
separation b/w religion, secularism,
and politics, reshaping anthropological
inquiry.



1) Critique of Secularism

Talal Asad argues secularism is not neutral or universal. It is a modern political project that secular states actively regulate and reshape religion.

2) Blurring the religion-politics divide

Asad shows that religion and politics are mutually constitutive, laws governance

and citizenship define what counts as religion

Example: Regulation of Islamic practices in modern states, and the formation of states on the basis of religion is example.

3) Colonial impact on Religion

Colonial power redefined religion by separating belief from practices, Indigenous religious traditions were reshaped to fit Western categories.

4) Redefining Anthropological Boundaries

Anthropology must study how power produces religious categories. Religion cannot be analyzed separately from law, state and origin and governance.

6) Conclusion:

While Clifford Geertz offer a meaning and

12

symbolic understanding of Religion and gives a universal definition of Religion. On the other hand Talal Asad rejects the universal and over general definition of religion. and moreover, Talal doesn't separate from other institutions of society and state, in fact he claims that religion is mainly interlinked with these institutions including politics, power, authorities.

Question No 6

1) Introduction:

The term cultural relativism refers to the understanding value and acceptance to other cultures while living within it.

Cultural relativism is became more significant after globalization followed by industrial revolution. Cultural

Relativism is an important aspect of modern anthropology. Anthropology always analyze other culture in relativism. The international law of

of human rights also advocate
for cultural relativism.

2) Cultural Relativism in the Context of Human Rights

In the human rights debate, cultural relativism challenges the idea that a single, universal set of rights cannot be applied equally across all societies. Relativists argue that

human rights framework largely shaped by Western liberal traditions - may overlook local histories, moral systems, religious values and social structures

Example: Family structure, gender roles, religious practices can not be explained by external anthropology and universal human rights may amount to cultural imperialism and undermining indigenous values and social cohesion

3) Tension Between Universalism and Cultural Relativism in Anthropological Thought

Anthropology has long been divided between these two positions, creating a theoretical and ethical tension.

3.1) Ethical Neutrality vs Moral Responsibility

Early anthropologists emphasized on complete neutrality over any culture's practices or beliefs. However, modern anthropologists argue that whether complete neutrality over coercion, inequality or oppression will be worthy.

3.2) Power and Representation

Relativists often argue that universal human rights often reflect Western political dominance, marginalizing non-Western voices. Universalists argue that rejecting universality risks empowering local elites and patriarchal structures.

Agency and Internal Diversity

Anthropologists now recognize that cultures are not homogenous. Internal dissent, reform movements and alternative interpretations exist within societies. This complicates strict relativism, as many cultural practices are contested.

Conclusion:

The debate between cultural relativism and universalism remains central to anthropological engagement with human rights. While cultural relativism guards against ethnocentrism and moral arrogance, universalism provides a necessary ethical framework to protect human dignity.

6/20