

INTRODUCTION:

“Religion” has an inherent and unchanging meaning; it has suggested the pursuit of the Holy Grail, an unending quest for a desirable something lying perpetually in the distance. A religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, world views that relate humanity to an order of existence. Many religions have narrative, symbols and sacred histories that aim to explain the meaning of life, or the universe. From their beliefs about the cosmos and human nature, people may derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred life style. Anthropologists have commonly called religion a “cultural universe”, one of the many things, including marriage, incest prohibitions, the family, and the social organization, found everywhere in the world. No society ever observed has failed to display something readily identifiable to scholars as religion. Magic is the use of rituals, symbols, actions, gestures and language that are believed to exploit supernatural forces. The belief in and the practice of magic has been present since the earliest human cultures and continues to have an important spiritual, religious and medicinal role in many cultures today.

1. DEFINITION OF RELIGION:

According to the philologists Max Muller, “the root of the English word “religion”, the Latin “religo”, was originally used to mean only reverence for God or the Gods, carefully pondering of divine things, piety”

The typical dictionary definition of religion refers to a “belief in, or the worship of , a God or Gods” or the “Service and worship of God or the supernatural.” Edward Burnett Tylor defined religion as “the belief in spiritual being”. The anthropologist Clifford Greetz defined religion as a “ system of symbol which acts to establish powerful pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing, these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”. The sociologist Emile Durkheim, in his seminal book *The Elementary forms of the Religious life*, defined religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things”

2. EXPLANATORY THEORIES OF RELIGION

Anthropological theories of religion have been concerned mainly with examining the content of various conceptions of the supernatural as prevalent in different societies at different times. The earlier anthropologists also trace the evolution of religion from cruder into developed forms. Recent theories concentrate on outlining the functions of religion.

2.1 ANIMISM

The earliest anthropological theory about primitive religion, seeking to trace its origins and explain it, was given by Edward Burnet Tylor. He said that although the origin appears to be multiple, yet there is only one idea underlying it, viz., belief in the soul (anima); hence the name animism for this theory. Tylor's conjectural arguments ran as follows. Primitive man had certain experiences; in his dreams he engaged in various types of activities even while he was sleeping; he met his dead ancestors in dreams and had hallucinatory experiences about them, and other beings, while he was awake; he heard the echoes of his own voice; he saw his own reflection in ponds, pools and rivers; and he failed to disentangle himself from his shadow. Even while he was having these understandable (to him) experiences, something of a much deeper import must also have happened periodically and sets the primitive man's mind thinking: people must have died. This catastrophe must have been a great challenge. It was thus that the belief in such an unseen thing, or power which kept people alive when it was in them, and made them dead when it left their bodies, emerged. Such a thing, or power, is called "soul". But how was it that sleep, so very like death, was not death, and how was it that people had all these various experiences in dreams, and while awake, heard echoes and saw shadows and reflections? Tylor says primitive man must have thought there must be two souls in a human being; a free soul which could go out of him and have experiences, and a body soul which if it left the body resulted in its death. The former may have been associated with and represented by breath and shadow, the latter by blood and head. Primitive man must have come to the conclusion that when the body soul left the body permanently, the person concerned died; and his soul became a ghost or spirit. So, Tylor believed that an attitude of awe and reverence towards these intangible and non-material spiritual beings forms the core of the earliest form of primitive religion. These spiritual beings are not under our control, and have, therefore, to be propitiated lest should do harm, and in order that they may render help. Thus ancestor worship was the earliest temples. Animism consists of such a belief in the role of spiritual beings in human life; it is a kind of polytheism. Tylor believed that in course of time there was evolutionary development in religious beliefs and forms, and the progress was from polytheism towards monotheism.

2.2 ANIMATISM AND MANAISM

Tylor's earliest critics said that animism is a later development in the history of religion. They postulated a pre-animistic stage when religious belief supposedly consisted mainly in the belief that everything has life and is animate. Prominent among these writers were Preuss and Max Muller. The latter's name is associated with the theory of naturism. More recently, Marett evolved a special form of animatist theory which he called manaism. Marett said that the entire

religious life of the primitive is born out of their belief in a certain ununderstandable, impersonal, non-material, and unindividualized supernatural power which takes abode in all the objects, animate and inanimate, that exist in the world. It lies more or less beyond the reach of the senses, but is manifested as physical force or such other excellences as man can think of in himself, others and also in objects around him. It may differ in intensity, the degree in which it is present in a person or an object, but in essence it is always the same. Such a set of beliefs Marett called animatism or manaism after the term mana used by Malanesians to designate this force. Majumdar's description and analysis of the conception of bonga among the Ho falls in line with Marett's theory of primitive religion. Some North American tribes call this power orenda. It is elsewhere known as aren and wakua.

2.3 NATURISM Max Muller said that the earliest form of religion must have been the worship of objects of nature; and evidence in support of such a view has come in from archaeological excavations conducted in Egypt and elsewhere. It is maintained that an attitude of awe or love and reverence towards objects of nature is born as a result of a "diseased" mind which invests lifeless things with life and all the power that is associated with life. This error of mind is, according to this theory, born out of defective language. Such linguistic errors as the sun rises and sets, or thunder sends rain, or the tree bear flowers and fruits, give rise to belief in some power inherent in the suns, thunder, trees, etc. So far as it is maintained that objects of nature were worshipped, no difficulty arises; evidence in favour of such a practice is heavy, But any claim to such worship being the earliest form of religion, or the explanation given, is not convincing. There is no proof to show that various conceptions follow The merit and usefulness of these various theories emerges when they are taken together, as each of them expresses some essential truth regarding primitive religion.

3. FUNCTIONAL THEORIES OF RELIGION

Malinowski and Radcliff Brown have given functional explanation of primitive religion. Malinowski points out with reference to the Trobriand Islanders, that religion is intimately connected with various emotional states, which are states of tension. For example, quite a few of their magical and religious practices centre round the fishing expeditions. These are the outcome of the state of fear which a possible disaster on the seas give rise to. Similarly, hate, greed, anger, love etc., may arise due to various situations in a man's life. These situations create stresses and strains and, if permitted to exist over a long period of time, frustrate all action. A human being has to be an acting individual; and normal

action is not possible in an emotionally upset state of existence. Religion is made use of in such a situation as a tool of adaptation; its purpose is to purge the human mind of its stress and strain, i.e., it is cathartic in its action. In other words, religion has the function of bringing about a readjustment between man and the supernatural in upset states of existence. It is a device to secure mental and psychical stability in an individual's life. Radcliffe-Brown takes a different stand. The function of religion, he says, is not to purge fear and other emotional strains from the human mind, but to instill a sense of dependence in it. He says that, ultimately, the survival of the group is more important than that of the individual; and if the latter has to make some sacrifices it is in his own interest to do so, because without social survival individual survival is not possible. However, the individual does not seem to realize this always, and he seeks to chart out an individual course of action. If each individual were to do this there would be utter confusion and chaos and no organized activity would be possible. Adherence to a norm of behavior is essential in terms of social survival; and it is fear of supernatural control and punishment, as also the anticipation of support in the case of socially approved conduct, that brings about this adherence. Therefore, the function of religion is to create a twofold feeling of dependence on society and thereby obtain the individual's concurrence with the social norms, the ultimate aim being social survival. The function of religion is the contribution it makes to that total activity which is designed to perpetuate society. Radcliffe- Brown's and Malinowski's sociological explanations are derived, in part, from Durkheim's theory of religion. Durkheim says that religious notions are born and conceived of when we find the social group collecting together for festivals and other social gatherings. Social life on such occasions is at its intensest, and impresses the human mind with the transcendentalism and omnipotence of the group. It is conceived of as the source of all that man has and all that man is. Religion is the recognition of the superiority, moral and physical, of the collective over the individual.

4. MAGIC: MEANING, TYPES AND PRINCIPLES

Magic is the use of rituals, symbols, actions, gestures and language that are believed to exploit supernatural forces. The belief in and the practice of magic has been present since the earliest human cultures and continues to have an important spiritual, religious and medicinal role in many cultures today. Magic is often viewed with suspicion by the wider community, and is sometimes practiced in isolation and secrecy. In non-scientific societies, perceived magical attack is sometimes employed to explain personal or societal misfortune. On the basis of evidence collected from all part of the world, Frazer found that magical formulae are based on two principles:

(i) Like products like; and

(ii) Once in contact always in contact.

He has reduced these principles into laws. The first he calls the law of similarity, and the magic associated with it homeopathic, imitative or mimetic magic. The second is called by him the law of contact, or contagion, and the magic associated with it contagious magic. On these two principles are based all the various magical rites found in primitive society. All types of magic are labeled sympathetic by Frazer, because he considers them to be based on the principle of sympathy between cause and effect. Magic, like modern science, is based on the observation of, and experimentation on, cause-effect phenomena.

Frazer sums up these conclusions in a diagram:

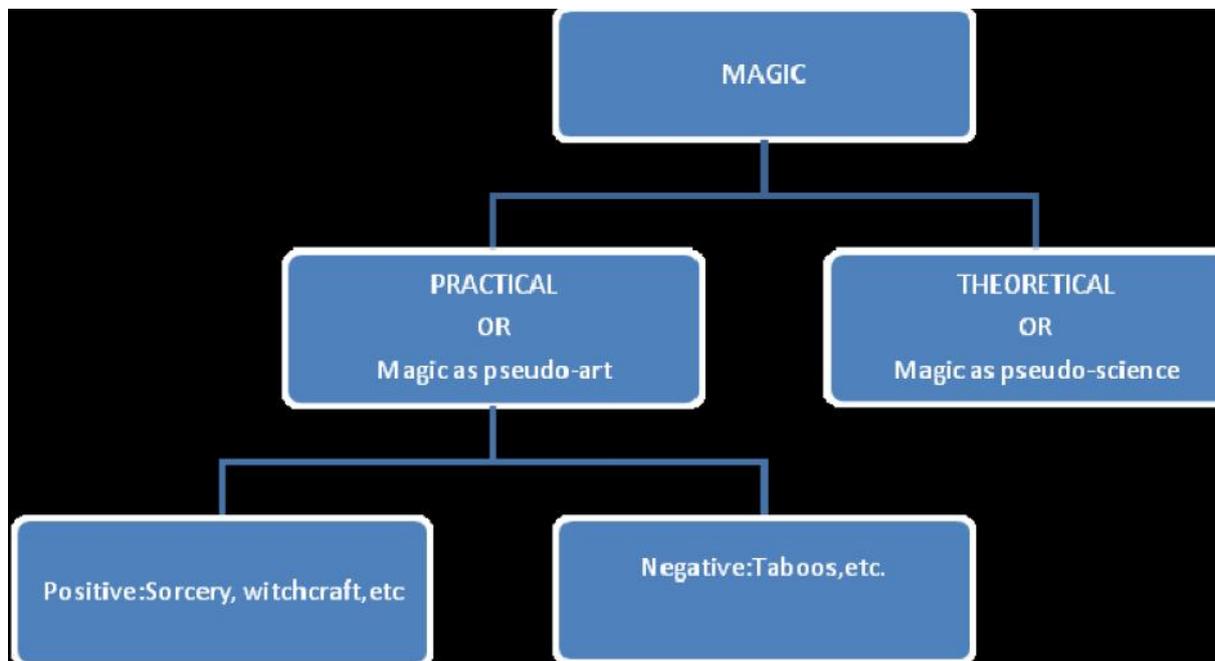
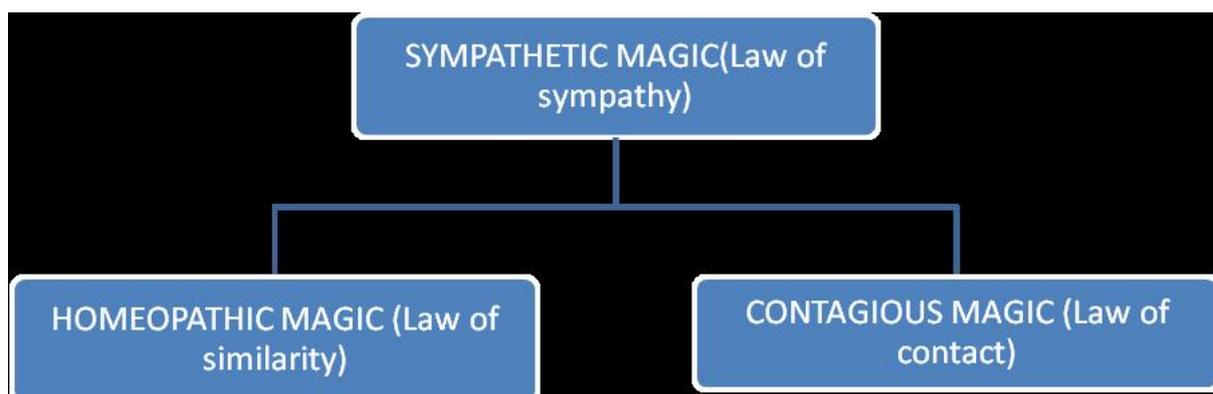


FIGURE-1 Explanation of magic according to Frazer Example of magical practices: In Chota Nagpur some tribal groups believe the thunder, with its rumbling noise, is the direct cause of rain. Therefore, when they want rain they go to a hill top, sacrifice a hen or a pig, and then start flinging down stones, rocks and boulders down the hill, expecting rain to follow the rumbling noises created by their action, just as it follows thunder. The Ho light fires expecting rain to come out of the cloud of smoke that is raised to the skies. These are cases of homoeopathic magic. So also was the human sacrifice of the Khond. It

is believed that as tears roll down the sufferer's eyes, and blood gushes forth from his wounds, so will rain come. A similar belief connecting tears with rain was the basis of a now-banned ceremony of the Tehri-Garhwal Rawaltas who used to make a person suffer an ordeal as a consequence of which tears would stream out of his eyes, and even on occasions cause death by strangulation. Frazer's collation of sorcery and taboo in the two types of magical behavior has been widely followed folk explanation of both that confirms his insight is plentiful. Frazer's own analogy of science and medicine, however, stood in his way. One of the most famous passages from *The Golden Bough* runs:

Magic is a spurious system of natural law as well as fallacious guide of conduct; it is a false science as well as an abortive art. Regarded as a system of natural law, i.e., as statement of the rules which determine the sequences of events throughout the world, it may be called theoretical magic; regarded as a set of precepts which human beings observe in order to compass their ends, it may be called practical magic. At the same time it is to be born in the mind that the primitive magician knows only magic on its practical side; he never analyzes the mental process on which his practice is based, never reflects on its abstract principle involved in his actions. Frazer said that savages perceived sympathies between things and expressed the idea in terms of the "Law of Sympathy". He was then able to show that there were two kinds of "Sympathy". There was sympathy based on observable similarity, such as that between gold and jaundice; and there was sympathy based on contact. Frazer called these the two sub types of the law of sympathy. Therefore he created a scheme in the form of a genealogy.



5. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND MAGIC

Closely related to magic are most forms of religious supplication, asking the divine for aid. Perhaps the most famous form is prayer, which is ordained by many religions as a spiritual duty, even apart from any effects on the outside world.

Both magic and religion contain rituals. Typically, there is a recognition that rituals do not always work; rather, it is thought to simply increase the likelihood of the desired result coming to pass. While many rituals focus on personal communion with the divine and spiritual Most cultures have or have had in their past some form of magical tradition that recognizes a shamanistic interconnectedness of spirit. This may have been long ago, as a folk tradition that died out with the establishment of a major world religion, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, or it may still co-exist with that world religion. Likewise, both can be divided by the effects they produce into perception and material changes. That is, whether prayer or some type of spell is used, it can either bring about an actual change (material) or a change in the way the subject feels (perception). The same prayer, for something to be "cooler" could therefore either actually raise the temperature, or simply alter the praying subject and any other targets feeling of the temperature. This is not to say that perception changes are not "real" as it could be used in healing to numb the sensation of pain, allowing healing to take place more easily. Religion and magic are two ways of tiding over crises. Primitive man must have had to face the realities of life. He did so with his belief in some superior power, or powers, either by trying to coerce it into service, i.e., by magic, or by praying and offering worship to it, i.e., by the religious approach. Both magic and religion are tools of adaptation, the objective being to help man out of difficult situations and relieve his tensions. The two approaches seem to have always existed together and sometimes they come so near each other as almost to blend into each other. However, it is believed that the magical approach is the more primitive. Man must have resorted to supplication only after his ego driven magical approach failed to purification, others often seek "magical" favourable results, such as healing or good luck in battle.

Totemism It is a system of belief in which certain objects, plants or animals have kinship relationship with social groups. Such animate and inanimate objects stand as emblems giving identity to the groups and form representations of the groups. They create religious feelings among the members and form the objects of worship, reverence and sacredness. According to Durkheim,

totemism is the earliest form of religion and it is quite prominently found among the Australian tribes, and such phenomena are also noted among the American tribes as well.

Taboo Taboo a Polynesian concept (tabu/tapu) but widely used in anthropological literature. It refers to something, use of which is collectively and strictly forbidden in religious context. The violation of a taboo has different consequences of temporary defilement, crime to be punished and attracts the sanctions of supernatural beings and so on. Taboo is associated with mana and Totems are considered taboos.

6.ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION

After introducing various concepts found in religious discourses, we draw your attention to the anthropological theories about religion. These include evolutionary, psychological, functional, Marxist and symbolic perspectives. John Lubbock (1834–1913), an English anthropologist, made an early attempt to combine archaeological evidence of prehistoric people, on the one hand, and anthropological evidence of primitive people, on the other, to trace the origin and evolution of religion (Encyclopædia Britannica Online). In this scheme, in the beginning there was absence of religious ideas and development of fetishism, followed by nature worship, and totemism (a system of belief involving the relationship of specific animals to clans), shamanism, anthropomorphism, monotheism (belief in one god), and finally ethical monotheism. This has foreshadowed, other forms of evolutionism, which were to become popular later. In the late nineteenth century with the influential works of Max Muller, W. Robertson Smith, Edward B. Tylor, Marrett, and Sir James G. Frazer, anthropological study on religion grew at a fast pace. These scholars were first to suggest that tribal religions might be amenable to study, following the rules of scientific method, and to posit specific methodological procedures for the comparative analysis of religious beliefs and practices. All of them sought to understand religious belief and practices at most fundamental or basic level. The anthropology of religion owes a great debt to Emile Durkheim who put forward the concept of sacred, profane orders, and the so-called supernatural and natural categories, which have proved to be more beneficial in better understanding the concept of religion. A strong impetus to subsequent application of Durkheimian theory is found among the British structural-

functionalists, such as Radcliffe-Brown, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, and Melford Spiro, etc., who also made significant contributions towards understanding religion. They primarily focussed on the religion of tribal groups. However, many of the contemporary exponents of anthropology of religion like Clifford Geertz, Melford Spiro, Victor Turner, Sherry Ortner, Mary Douglas and Stanley Tambiah have devoted bulk of their attention to local variants of major world religions – Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity and the impact of the world religions in developing countries like Java, Indonesia, Morocco, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Nepal, and Burma, instead of the religions of isolated tribal groups. Contemporary ethnographers concentrate on examining religious diversity in complex societies rather than providing further documentation for uniformity in tribal religions. Herein, you are provided with a brief account of each of the dominant theoretical perspectives of anthropology on religion.

Evolutionary Perspective Like so much else in anthropology, the study of the religious notions of primitive people arose within the context of evolutionary theory. Besides their evolutionary assumption about religion, the followers of evolutionary theory show overwhelming Eurocentric biases. But it is true that they made valuable contributions to the study of religion. Most of the nineteenth century anthropologists derive assumptions about religion from the Judeo-Christian heritage and from their own religious experiences within that tradition. E.B. Tylor, expounds in his book, *Primitive Culture* (1871), that animism is the earliest and most basic religious form. Out of this evolved fetishism, belief in demons, polytheism, and, finally, monotheism is derived from the exaltation of a great god, such as the sky god, in a polytheistic context. He defines religion in such a way that all forms of it could be included, namely, as ‘the belief in Spiritual Beings’. He firmly states that religion is a cultural universal, for no known cultures are without such beliefs. Belief in spirits began as an uncritical but nonetheless rational effort to explain such puzzling empirical phenomenon as death, dreams and possessions. Herbert Spencer advocated ancestor worship, a relatively similar system to Tylor’s animism. The 19th century anthropologists were deeply influenced by the presumptions of their own society so called ‘Western’. R.R. Marrett (1909), on the other hand regarded animatism as beginning of religious ideas. As discussed earlier, his derivation is from ideas as mana (power), mulungu (supreme creator), orenda (magic power), concepts found in the Pacific, Africa, and America, respectively, referring to a supernatural power (a kind of supernatural

'electricity') that does not necessarily have the personal connotation of animistic entities and that becomes especially present in certain men, spirits, or natural objects. Marrett criticizes Tylor for an overly intellectual approach, as though primitive men used personal forces as explanatory hypotheses to account for dreams, natural events, and other Concepts and Approaches to the Study of Religion (Evolutionary, Psychological, Functional and Marxist) Religion 14 phenomena. For Marrett, primitive religion is 'not so much thought out as danced out,' and its primary emotional attitude is not so much fear as awe. For Sir James Frazer human thought is best understood as a progression from magic to religion to science. By publishing his two volume book titled *The Golden Bough* (1890), he attempts to construct a universal theory of magic, religion and science. According to Frazer, magic is the primordial form of human thought. He further postulates early man was dominated by magic, which viewed nature as 'a series of events occurring in an invariable order without the intervention of personal agency'. These magicians, according to Frazer, believed in nature and developed imaginary laws, which are of course, not real. However, in course of time the more intelligent members of the society, in the state of disillusionment, conceived of spiritual beings with powers superior to man, who could be induced by propitiation to alter the course of nature to his advantage. According to Frazer, this was the stage of religion. Later on this was seen to be an illusion and men entered the final, the scientific stage of development. Magic, according to Frazer, is based on the principle of contagion or on 'sympathy' or the notion of imitation, said to be the earliest form. In more advanced societies, Frazer contends, magic eventually is replaced by religion, and both are finally replaced by science. For Durkheim, evolutionary advancement consists in the emergence of specific, analytic, profane ideas about the 'cause' or 'category' or 'relationship' from diffuse, global, sacred images. These 'collective representations,' as he calls them, of the social order and its moral force included such sacra as 'mana', 'totem' and 'god' (Sills, 1968). The above postulates on religion come from intellectual theorisation made from the existing reports, travelogues, and Christian missionary works. These anthropologists never had firsthand experience of non-western cultures nor did they theorise on the basis of systematic study of culture of the people in totality and, therefore, they were called armchair anthropologists. Anthropologists like Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Alfred Kroeber discredit the speculative evolutionary perspective and seek explanations for similarities of rituals, myths and symbols found in different cultures through culture contact.

For them cultural dispersion, instead of independent evolution of religious thoughts and actions, is the reason for such similarities. They emphasise need for understanding culture as an integrated whole and interpreting the cultural elements in that pattern, including the religious activities, in a meaningful way. But, there are others like Emile Durkheim who thinks that emotions of the individuals and collective consciousness in social environment shape the individuals' religious feeling. While, on other hand, Max Weber believes that the beliefs and emotions have evolved into rational religion and higher thinking in religion. Others such as Meyer Fortes and Clifford Geertz also recognise the psychological component in religious behaviour. However, after the evolutionary perspective, psychological approach to religion based on Sigmund Freud's approaches of psychoanalysis and neurotic symptoms has become a dominant approach to understand religion in anthropology.

Psychological Approach Few years before World War I, there was the rise of systematic psychologism of psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. His thesis is that religious rituals and beliefs are homologous with neurotic symptoms (Eriksen, 1950). According to him, a deep subconscious psychological conflict within social groups is responsible for the development of religion. He explains that the psychological conflict between the father and son, the hatred of son towards father, his desire for killing him and the guilt feeling are the reasons for the creation of totem based on the Oedipus myth. The worship or respect shown to the totemic animal is the reflection of subconscious conflict between the son and father and the latter's kinsmen. The psychological defence mechanisms involve projections to avoid conflict and reduce anxiety. This is like "I hate X because you hate X", which can be analysed at cultural level. Further, the childhood experiences carried out through out adult life in the forms of images and in this regard dependency of children on parents is significant. The dependency on parents by the children in the latter part of life is projected on the spiritual beings. But Carl Jung takes a different approach taking the projections to cultural level of a group's collective consciousness and Oedipus is just one example, and others include the Trickster, the Hero, Orphan, the Creator, the Sage or Fool, etc. Following this line of thinking, Kardiner, who is considered as a neo-Freudian, sought to demonstrate that religious institutions of tribal people are projections of a "basic personality structures," formed not by the action of an unconsciously remembered historical trauma but by the more observable traumas produced by child-training practices. Many others like Eriksen (1950) have also been influenced by Freud's concept. Eriksen, drawing

upon developments in ego personality to be a joint product of psychobiological maturation, cultural context, and historical experience, interpreted the religious notions of the Yurok and the Sioux in terms of certain basic modes of relating to the world. The basic Freudian premise is that religious practices can be usefully interpreted as expressions of unconscious psychological forces, and this has become, amid much polemic, an established tradition of enquiry. Ruth Benedict (1934) in her work has provided a background for all later culturepersonality studies using the same method. She explains cultural patterns of some American Indians in terms of configurations from certain personality types. The psychological approach has been superseded by functionalist approach but recently the significance of psychology once again came to light in a different route as symbolic anthropology. The context is that there has been a considerable discussion on 'primitive thought' which is different from that of the 'modern rational thought'. The former is associated with lack of written language, technology, small in number and lack of uniformity, etc., and its religion is expressed in ritualistic activity and magic. The latter is associated with the scriptures, standard religious activities, rationalisation of behaviour and philosophical approach to life. However, there are commonalities and continuities in these two forms of thoughts and actions. In this respect, the approach of Clifford Geertz to religion is significant, as modern or primitive religion can be understood in an integrated system of thought through symbolism

. **Functionalist Approach** Various forms of functionalism in anthropology— which focus on social patterns and institutions with reference to their functions in the larger cultural context— have proved illuminating for wider understanding of religion. This has helped to discover interrelations between differing aspects of religion as it connects various institutions. Functionalism emphasises on the interrelations between the various elements of a social system, and, therefore, pays less attention to evolutionary origins and the notion of "survivals" – the continuation of primitive elements in a Concepts and Approaches to the Study of Religion (Evolutionary, Psychological, Functional and Marxist) Religion 16 culture. Society is seen as a self-regulating system in which religion, economic organisation, and kinship form parts of an organic whole. The realm of the sacred is defined by the attitude people have towards it – rituals are sacred if they are performed with reverence and awe. Numerous functional aspects of religion include providing explanation or comfort; sanctions on social, economic and political norms and institutions; and aiding

ecological adaptation and unifying the social group. Anthropologists like Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, etc., who approached religion from functionalist perspective provide explanation that satisfies human needs and solidarity of the group. Malinowski, for instance, in his work on the Trobriand Islanders emphasises on the close relationship between myth and ritual. He puts forward the idea of psychological functionalism, religious acts fulfilling the psychological need and satisfaction. A mortuary ritual, for instance, is intended to release the soul and prevent it from returning to haunt the living. Like Frazer, he distinguishes magic from religion which aims at something beyond itself. Its object is not performance of the rite. In magic the end is the efficacious magic itself. Evans-Pritchard observes that while emotions, desires, and impulses undoubtedly play a part in religion, the performance of a religious or magical act need not automatically produce the psychological effects, as Malinowski supposes. He argues in Azande religion that witchcraft has to be understood in social context. In this sense, he agrees with Durkheim but disagrees with the notion that religion is illusion. Radcliffe-Brown (1922) provides an account of Andamanese religious beliefs and ceremonies. He asserts that the Andaman Islanders' main supernatural beings are spirits of the dead, associated with the sky, forest, and sea, and nature spirits, which are thought of as personifications of natural phenomena. Applying Durkheimian analysis he presents an organic picture of society; religion integrates society and rituals bring in solidarity of the group. Many anthropologists followed this stream of approach which however slowly has died out with the criticisms from the newer theorists. In India M.N. Srinivas' (1952) study of society and religion among the Coorgs is an outstanding contribution to the study of religion in functionalist perspective. He very innovatively integrates social structure with religion which he finds it operating at different levels – local, regional, peninsular and all India. Drawing the difference between Indological and sociological approach, he adopts the latter for a meaningful treatment of religion in relation with the social structure of the Coorg. He demonstrates that various rituals organised at family, patrilineal joint family (okka), village and nad level bring in solidarity and unity among different social segments