

Representation of Sherpa Culture in Ortner's *Sherpas through their Rituals*

Abstract

The current research work explores the misrepresentation of Sherpa culture and its identity. The text Sherpas through their Rituals is entirely a cultural text. This research paper reveals the hidden cultural aspects of Sherpa and Orient culture and how it is misrepresented by an Orientalist researcher. The research explores the biased perception of the writer. The text unfolds with brief descriptions by the ethnographer and author Sherry Ortner on the Sherpa areas of Nepal. The central body of the text explains the chapters more specifically about the rituals and identity.

Key Terms: Culture, Representation, Stereotypical, Orient, Occident, Orientalism,

Sherry B. Ortner's *Sherpas through their Rituals* is entirely a cultural text, this research paper demands the theoretical tool related to cultural studies. The present research work is all about the representation of Sherpa culture and its identity. The main objective of this paper is to reveal the hidden cultural aspects regarding the Sherpa culture. The text *Sherpas through their Rituals* commences with brief descriptions by the ethnographer and author Sherry B. Ortner on the Sherpa areas of Nepal, the ethnographic process and ritual and setting the scene for the main body of the study. The central body of the text consists of chapters on specific rituals and identity in which the auspicious occasions are explained in detail, after which she commences to interpret this data in terms of other underlying factors using structural analysis as a major framework to meet these ends.

The major argument—the fictional depiction of Orient culture and civilization, the culture of Sherpa is perceived as patronizing and stereotypical way with a huge misconception and preconceived notion of the West about the Sherpa people, their belief system, the way these people act, even though the Westerners have not been experienced

the Eastern culture anymore. The West treats these people by the virtue of the color of skin. This research paper explores that why the West has racist view, stereotypical images upon the East and why they developed a preconceived notion about these lands and the culture even though they do not know personally about these Orient cultures. The fictional depiction of Eastern culture reflects the certain interest of the West. Moreover, the West and the US looks upon the countries of the Orient and Middle East, therefore, distorts the actual reality of these places and peoples. Hence, the cultures of the Eastern countries are understood with unfamiliar, uncivilized, barbaric and stereotypical way which we view that part of the world as Orientalism.

Since, *Sherpas through their Rituals* is a cultural text; the previous research has been done only through the general ethnographic sketch and perspective. The previous researchers analyzed the text from the lens of ritual model rather than cultural and postcolonial perspective. The current research work explores how the Sherpa culture is misrepresented from an Orientalist and Post colonialist perspective. Therefore, the researcher here goes through the profound criticism to find out how Ortner has misrepresented the Sherpa culture from the Western mindset and Orientalist perspective. Ethnographic research fascinates the insight of the people's cultures and perspectives, however, by applying effective anthropological analysis of these situations and events many underlying levels of insight may become apparent and clear.

Similarly, by performing a close analysis of Sherry Ortner's text *Sherpas through their Rituals* and focusing on certain ritual descriptions may be perceived how the cultural approach is applied to her practical fieldwork, while allowing the strengths and weaknesses of her particular approach to be critiqued. As we know culture and identity refers social category, which is defined by membership, rules and characteristic or behaviors, or socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or

views as unchangeable but socially consequential at once. In the latter sense, identity is modern formulation of dignity, pride, or honor that implicitly links these to social categories. But the West has monolithic view upon the East; it does not accept the diverse culture of the non Western people. The sense of pride, dignity, civilization, culture and honor are analyzed from pejorative mindset. Therefore, Edward Said studies about the Orient culture and developed the concept of “Orientalism” to critique the Western racist legacy of so called white people.

Moreover, in the text *Sherpas through their Rituals*, Sherpa people are reluctant to avoid their cultural identity. These peoples still preserve their cultural identity. There is great value of Tibetan culture in the Sherpa community because most of their culture is transformed from Tibet. The cultural value is still prevalent in the Sherpa community and these peoples celebrate their festival from native and the indigenous way. But Ortner finds it as uncivilized, barbaric and monolithic. She explains from the patronizing and stereotypical perceptions, the fictional depictions of the East especially to the societies and people who inhabit the places of Asia, North America and Middle East.

The text *Sherpas through their Rituals* is a result of field work conducted from September 1966 to February 1968 in Khumbu region of Nepal by anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner. This study was presented as a research work by Ortner in the Anthropology department of Chicago University. However, this text is the revised form of her original research work. In her research work while analyzing the symbols, cultures, images and so forth, she discovers conflict, contradiction as well as problems in the wider social and cultural world. She also explores the cultural misrepresentation of Sherpa people in wider horizon and extends their cultural practices to the external world—basically to the Western academia. It becomes one of the subject matters of the Western discourse about the Eastern culture and civilization.

Sherry Ortner's research text begins with brief descriptions on the Sherpa areas of Nepal, the ethnographic process and ritual, hence setting the scene for the main body of the study. The central body of the text consists of chapters of the auspicious occasions are explained in detail, after which the author starts to interpret this data in terms of other underlying factors using structural analysis as a major framework to meet these ends. The author explains that the first half of each chapter is paradigmatic; description of the universe of elements upon which the ritual is operated, the second half is an analysis of the narrative or discursive organization of these elements and the representation of all cultural activities in her research work.

Sherpas through their Rituals helps to understand the nature of the Sherpa society through an analysis of the meanings of certain rituals, cultures and traditions. Likewise, it represents Geert's "Cockfight" for the Balinese people here, Ortner's goal is to explore Sherpa culture to the readers unfolding and revealing the actual representation as Geertz represents the actual Balinese people. The cultural practices are reflected and represented to make Sherpa social life intelligible for both participants and observer.

The famous reviewer of the text Bishnu Prasad Dahal, coins the idea from Ortner's text, furthermore, he writes in his research paper "Ordering Sherpa Life Through Their Rituals: Symbolic Interpretative Perspective" (A Review of *Sherpas Through Their Rituals* by Sherry B. Ortner) that "the symbols of the hospitality are to maintain order in the status of hierarchy, produce order in the political functions of party interactions, and the reciprocity" (234). According to him the gestures and cultural practices shown in *Yangdzi* transaction is represented with misconception and underscores the Sherpa social practices. The writer has included Sherpas' concepts, proverbs, myths, legends and native terms in negative way portraying as uncivilized and barbaric. It shows that there is lack of proper research of the native terms.

Similarly, the critic of the text *Sherpas through their Rituals*, Cian M. Kerrisk writes by performing a close analysis and focusing on certain ritual descriptions about the Sherpa culture, it may be perceived how the Structuralist approach to anthropology is applied to her practical fieldwork, while allowing the strengths and weaknesses of her particular approach to be critiqued. Kerrisk also criticizes the scholarly article of Ortner. In accordance with Dr. Prakash Upadhyaya who is an anthropologist, while reviewing the text of Ortner, furthermore he writes in his book *Nepali Culture and Society* about Sherpa culture as:

Ortner leads us towards the discovery of conflict, contradiction, and stress in the wider social and cultural world, opens with brief description of a ritual. The ritual is then dissected, and its symbolic elements are used as guides in the exploration of problematic structures, relationship, and ideas of the culture. (121)

From the above lines Ortner tries to show the conflict, contradiction and wider social problems in the Sherpa culture. Likewise, the Orient culture is mostly misrepresented and patronized by the West similarly; she also underscores and humiliates the Sherpa culture from Western mindset and perspective. She still looks the Eastern culture from tilted perception and tries to show the inferiority of non Western culture and civilization. There is diverse Sherpa culture but the West views it as uncivilized, savage and barbaric with the Western judgmental lens and distorts the actual reality of the diverse culture and civilization because the West has certain interest.

Moreover, the current research paper examines the cultural domination and misrepresentation of Sherpa culture by the researcher of the text. The research work tries to critique and explores that the Sherpa culture is misrepresented in monolithic, reductive and stereotypical ways, the Sherpa culture is portrayed in negative way. All these cultural

practices are reflected through *Yangdzi* transaction from where Ortner did her research about Sherpa culture. *Yangdzi* transaction is a local festival where Sherpa people exchange their goods; they perform the religious and cultural activities. Her research findings are best in the field of the anthropology and cultural studies. She is able to explore the issues of cultural practices and its significance in their daily life. Her scholarly dissertation is indispensable in the field of cultural studies. However, her research findings are guided by the legacy of Western superiority. She looks upon the Sherpa culture from the biased mindset and tries to explore mostly the problematic situations without knowing the proper native terms, culture, language and civilization. Had she remained neutral in the case of research findings, the research would have been wonderful piece of writing.

Orientalism tries to answer the questions, why we think of the Middle East, for example, we have preconceived notion that what kind of people live there, what they believe in, how they act even though we have not been there or met anybody. More generally, Orientalism asks how those people are different by virtue of the color of the skin. The central argument of the Orientalism is that why we acquire such types of biased knowledge regarding the Orient and its culture is not in a sense or object but reflects certain interests of the Westerners, hence it is highly motivated. Thus, Said writes about the domination of Orient culture and the influence of imperialism in the Orient in his magnificent text *Culture and Imperialism* as:

Just as none of us is outsider or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings. (7)

Specifically, Said argues why the West, Europe and the US view the countries of the East and Middle East with patronizing perception hence, these countries distorts the actual reality of these places and peoples. He calls these lands, which we view such part of the world as “Orient”. A theoretical framework the West uses to understand with unfamiliar and stereotypical gaze to look upon the people, culture and civilization of the Middle East. There are other forms of struggle as well, such as the struggle of ideas and imaginings. The Western people have preconceived notion, ideas and images regarding the Eastern people and culture. Therefore, Said is challenging the hierarchy between the insiders and outsiders, hierarchy between the West and the East, hierarchy between rational and irrational because he argues that none of the Orient and Muslim peoples are outsider or beyond geography, rather this is just propaganda and the discourse constructed by the West.

The scope of Edward Said’s scholarship established *Orientalism* as a foundational text in the field of Postcolonial Cultural Studies, which examines the denotations and connotations of Orientalism, and the history of a country’s postcolonial period. Postcolonial theory as a general comes from literary movements in the late twentieth century that raised the questions of power dynamics, especially between an imperial metropolis and its peripheries, between colonial powers and margins and its questioning relationship of imperial power and also how they end up being negotiated—especially discursively within texts, art and literature. Said explores the history of European colonial rule and political domination of Eastern civilizations, distorts intellectual objectivity of even the most knowledgeable, well meaning, and culturally sympathetic. Therefore, the Western Orientalist constructed the term “Orientalism” that becomes a pejorative word regarding non Western peoples and cultures. In this regard said writes in his influential book *Orientalism* as:

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India, or Egypt, in the later nineteenth century, took an interest in those countries, which was never far from their status, in his mind, as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact — and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism. (11)

Edward Said's theoretical text *Orientalism* is considered to be the influential work on which Postcolonial theory developed. His work, including *Orientalism*, focused on exploring and questioning the artificial boundaries, or the stereotypical boundaries, that have been drawn between the East and West, specifically as they relate to the Middle East. In doing so, Said focused specifically on stereotypes of Middle Easterners; however, these same ideas can be extended to include how we view all as “others”. This is the “us”-“other” mentality that many colonizers take with them into a new country. Such simple generalizations lead to misconceptions and miscommunications, which are often the basis of postcolonial analysis.

Orient is an ideological move and ideologically conceptualized. It is culturally constructed by the west—the former European empires made the concept of Orient and Occident. According to Edward Said, now Orient is particularly Arab world, his critique of “Orientalism” and rejection of American interest and attitude towards Islam as well as the Eastern countries. He further criticizes the American mindset and biased perception towards the Islam, where Islam and Orient world is perceived as a label, a monolithic reductive and parochial which underscores the diverse histories and cultures of the Arabic and Orient world. Islam only features in the Western newspaper only in those times when “Islam” suffers from political turmoil. These Westerners are interested only in the violent,

bizarre, exotic, barbaric Islam and Orient. In the US and Western academics, the issues of Islam and Orient hardly become the subject of serious academic discussions. In this regard Said argues in his influential essay “Islam as News” about the negative portrayal of the Orient culture and the Islam as:

Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization.

Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being. (191)

The Western arrogance to Orient world is an Orientalist gaze which always Orientalizes the Eastern world. It is the continuation of Anglo-French Eurocentric perspective towards the Orient in general and Islam in particular—the body of literatures which we called as “Orientalism”. Arab people are depicted as came-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers and so on. In this way Arabs and Orients are culturally dominated and undermined.

Moreover, Orientalism is a way of looking the East with reductionist, monolithic and stereotypical image constructed by the West to undermine the non Western world, which imagines, emphasizes, exaggerates and distorts the actual reality of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the US. The Western world involves in seeing Arab and Eastern culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and barbaric. Edward Said, in his magnificent book, *Orientalism*, defined it as the acceptance in the West that there is basic distinction between the East and West by elaborating theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political phenomena concerning to the Orient.

According to Said, Orientalism began from the period of European Enlightenment and colonization of the Arab World. Orientalism provided a rationalization for European colonialism based on a self made history in which “the West” constructed “the East” as they are extremely different and inferior, and therefore we see there is Western intervention in their internal affairs, which is an indirect form of hegemony. The early Orientalism can be seen in European paintings and photographs and also in the images of nineteenth and early twentieth century. These paintings created by European artists depict and represent the Arab World as an exotic and mysterious place of sand, harems and belly dancers, reflecting a long history of Orientalist fantasies.

Furthermore, the imperial and colonial super power house, the Western countries depict the fictional, romanticized and stereotype representations of Arabic culture — the Orientalism invented by French and English Orientalists, and continued in the twentieth century by American Orientalists. As such, Orientalist stereotypes of the cultures of the Eastern world have served, and continue to serve, as implicit justifications for the colonial ambitions and the imperial endeavors of the US and the European powers. Therefore, the stereotypes image created by Orientalist about Arabs and Muslims is critiqued by Said in *Islam Through Western Eyes* as:

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab–Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression. (73)

Similarly, France colonized Algeria and French entrepreneurs produced postcards of Algerian women that were circulated in France. While Algerian women were portrayed in these photographs as if the camera is capturing a real moment in their everyday lives, the women are actually set up in the photographer's studio. These photographs were circulated as evidence of the exotic, backwards and strange customs of Algerians, in fact, they reveal more about the French colonial perspective than about Algerian life in the early nineteenth century. This is an example of how Arab women have been exoticized and eroticized for the pleasure of the European male voyeur, as these photographs make visible French colonial fantasies of penetrating the harem and gaining access to Arab women's private spaces. This publication includes photographs of recreated Arab streets, accompanied by captions that capture the Orientalist thinking of the time. For example, the caption that accompanies the image "Egyptian Girl in Street of Cairo" refers to the uncivilized manners of the Egyptians, and her unsightly disguise. In addition to being written about as an object on display, her characteristics are described as belonging to a backward culture.

Meanwhile, an Orientalist has a stereotypical image towards the non Western world, people, culture and the society. Said advocates that the cultural representation is portrayed negatively, such as representation in art, literature, culture and people, thus, the Westerners have fully political interest in non Western countries. The West has a tendency to view the Islam as a religion of reductionist and monolithic. The Western scholar speaks/reduces to the religion and underscores the religion, culture, art and so forth of Asia, South America and Middle East. The Western scholars speak about Islam, variation of Islamic cultures and traditions of particular country are forgotten and undermined. In this regard to support Said's argument the lines are coined from his groundbreaking text *Orientalism* as:

The Orient and Islam have a kind of extra real, phenomenological reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert.

From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work. (190)

According to him the real people, the lives, prospects live in these countries thus; Middle East countries have diverse kinds of cultural practices. Moreover, the tendency of “othering”, “excluding” and “marginalizing”—the goal of othering, excluding and marginalizing is to control and to rule the other non Western countries as the concept of Eurocentric and legacy of racism is still prevalent and certain set of static images are created by the West to impose the hegemony, these static images never change in the eyes of Westerners. The white man thinks that ‘it is white man's burden to civilize East’—the concept of colonial subordination. The power comes from Western secular world in order to dominate eastern people. The West looks to the East only through tilted perspective.

Despite the groundbreaking theoretical concept about Orientalism, Said is critiqued by many critics because he ignored the genuine contributions to the study of Eastern cultures made by Westerners. To support this criticism, one of the critics Bernard Lewis writes in his scholarly writing “The Question of Orientalism”, which was published in *The New York Review of Books* as:

Orientalism was used mainly in two senses. One is a school of painting—that of a group of artists, mostly from Western Europe, who visited the Middle East and North Africa and depicted what they saw or imagined, sometimes in a rather romantic and extravagant manner. The second and more common meaning, unconnected with the first, has been a branch of

scholarship. The word, and the academic discipline which it denotes, date from the great expansion of scholarship in Western Europe from the time of the Renaissance onward. Orientalists turned their attention to other languages. (3)

A critic of Said's theory, such as the historian Bernard Lewis, argues that Said's theory contains many factual, methodological, and conceptual errors. Therefore, he claims that Said ignores many genuine contributions to the study of Eastern cultures made by Westerners during the Enlightenment and Victorian eras. Said's theoretical base does not explain why the French and English pursued the study of Islam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, long before they had any control or hope of control in the Middle East. He has been criticized for ignoring the contributions of the Italians and the Dutch, and also of the massive contribution of German scholars. Lewis claims that the scholarships of these nations were more important to European Orientalism than the French or British, but the countries in question either had no colonial projects in the Middle East, or no connection between their Orientalist research and their colonialism. Said's theory also does not explain why much of Orientalist study did nothing to advance the cause of imperialism.

Therefore, in order to dominate and hegemonize the Orient, the Occident expresses the major common Western misconception about the East; this misconception exists in the Western mind. Said delves further into the causes of creating differences by the Western legacy of superiority. Orientalism is a way of looking the East with reductionist, monolithic and stereotypical image constructed by the West to undermine the non Western world, which imagines, emphasizes, exaggerates and distorts differences of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the US. The Western world humiliates Arab and eastern culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and barbaric.

Edward Said, in his magnificent theoretical text, *Orientalism*, defined it as the acceptance in the West where the basic distinction between East and West is taken as the starting point for elaborating theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient.

The ethnography of Sherpas is useful in understanding the conventional oriented and remotely located Sherpa community of Khumbu region and also explores their problems before the world. Based on the cultural framework, *Sherpas through their Rituals* is an important piece of cultural writing first of its kind ever written in Nepal. It believes that all kinds of religious services, cultures and rituals have a broadly common structure, centering on offerings and petitions to the gods, and offering threats to the demons, and closing with distribution of ritual foods to all present from which it is inferred that the merit, luck, protection etc. believed to be the outcome of such rituals are valued by everyone in the community and therefore everybody would vie for a share as far as possible.

According to Ortner, offering rituals deal with problems of religion, anger and social cooperation. *Nyungne* deals with the problems of marriage, family and asceticism. An exorcism ritual deals with problems of wealth, pollution and reincarnation. It can therefore be seen that by analyzing these operate in a paradigmatic set, the underlying principles or deep structure can indeed be inferred. In a positive light Ortner breaks the traditions by actually referring to Theravada Buddhism in Thailand and contrasting “the differences between the two Buddhist sects, the two societies and the inherent social ramifications and differences that are evident” (159). Ortner also states that part of the explanation must be located in historical facts. She collected historical facts and evidence to make her research strong. Here, she focuses on the discursive method to give complete form to her research work.

However, being one of the best research findings, there are some drawbacks of the text. While doing profound criticism of the entire text of Ortner, the researcher finds some weaknesses as well. As we know culture is manmade part to make our life easier and smoothness. Therefore, culture is dynamic and changeable, new cultures are developed according to time and situation, but Ortner has ignored the new cultural adaptation of Sherpa's alternative cultural strategies. She just expressed them by the process of change, but she did not try to explain the changing patterns of symbols and representation of culture in Sherpa life. The disparity between the insiders and outsiders is another problem in the text *Sherpas through their Rituals* because the outsiders view the Sherpa culture as problematic, stereotypical and uncivilized but the insiders enjoy the cultural practices with great fun. For example, while Ortner sees Sherpa parties as full of competitions and tensions, Sherpas describe them as having fun and get full entertainment.

As Said argues why the West, Europe and US looks up the East and Middle East and distorts the actual reality of such places and people even though the Westerners have not been there and met anyone. The Western scholars have preconceived and tilted notion towards the East. To support this argument, the lines from the Ortner's text *Sherpas through their Rituals* depict as; "it uses terms and images that select and emphasize some aspects of that situation, that distort or ignore others" (8). These given lines illustrate the biasness of the scholars while doing research or writing about the eastern cultures. The outsider distorts the actual reality and misrepresents the culture. The Eastern cultural practices are ignored and distorted by the Western scholars by intervening in internal affairs. In this regard Ortner is in somehow flexible to use the native terms and gives emphasis to the local culture.

However, her ideas and perceptions are not guided by the Western mindset as well. She does research in the Orient with monolithic and pejorative lens. This is a great

contradiction found in her research work, on the one hand she supports the Sherpa culture on the other hand she criticizes the Sherpa culture because she is influenced by the Western ideology and still looks upon from the racist view point. Furthermore, to prove this argument the researcher coins the idea from the text *Sherpas through their Rituals* as:

The system as it is presently constituted, to revolutionary programs that depict the situation in such a way as to reveal its evils and exhort people to destroy it. Culture is always biased—selected, partial, interpreted—but both the sources and the direction of bias are precisely among the key problems of cultural analysis. (8)

The above lines explain that there is still tilted perception about the East by the Western scholars. Ortner also supports the idea of Edward Said that the tendency of “othering”, “marginalizing” and “excluding”. The West tries to depict the barbaric, uncivilized and stereotypical images of the East. From the Ortner’s text it also reveals that the Western scholars are interested in evil things to destroy the culture and civilization. She herself realizes that the Western scholars write about the Eastern culture and civilization with patronizing and biased perspective, she is also influenced by it and she also does the same thing in her research work as other Western researchers are doing. They view the Eastern culture from the biased perspective to impose one kind of cultural hegemony.

Moreover, in every aspect of cultural practices of Sherpa people Ortner view as problematic. She views Sherpa marriage as a problem in Sherpa life. According to Sherpa culture there is practice of polyandry marriage. But Ortner ignores the practice of polyandry in Sherpa culture and tries to interpret that polyandry is done only in the uncivilized culture. It is not clear in her text if they practice polyandry or they accept new form of marriage system, in this situation her writings seem to be controversial. She does not accept the cultural practices about marriage rather she describes it from the Western

mindset and perspective. This type of analysis of Ortner is completely biased; she sees Sherpa marriage from tilted, monolithic and stereotypical perception whose research work is completely baseless and unauthentic. Furthermore, there are no data to support Ortner's claim and interpretation; there is little evidence to support her view of problematic features of Sherpa society.

Said's argument is why the Westerners are interested only in the violent, bizarre, exotic, barbaric Islam and Orient regarding the representation of their culture. The Western intellectuals focused on exploring and questioning the artificial boundaries, or the stereotypical boundaries, that have been drawn between the East and West, specifically as they relate to the Middle East. Therefore, Said's argument is relevant in a sense that Ortner as being a Western intellectual sheds the Orient culture and civilization. To support this argument, in her research work Ortner is against the Sherpa marriage system and accuses the marriage process as problematic and uncivilized.

Similarly, Ortner states that religion is responsible for making marriage problematic. The Sherpa peoples follow Buddhism and according to Buddhism one should remain celibacy for the salvation. On the one hand the most striking aspects of orthodox Buddhism are its ascetic ideology to remain unmarried, and on the other hand there is system of polyandry in Sherpa culture. This dual role of Sherpa people creates contradiction. However, this is one type of cultural practices done inside the Sherpa community. To criticize Ortner's research work, the Western scholars must not misrepresent the cultural practices with stereotypical way. Whatever the Eastern people believe in, how they act and celebrate is not the concern of the Western writers. Thus, the Western writers view the Eastern culture from cunning eyes. As the lines from the text *Sherpas through their Rituals* depict the actual reality of the so called Western scholar's racist legacy as:

The key vow of Buddhist ascetism, and the symbol of all the other renunciations of “the world,” is celibacy, abstention from sexual relations. On this point alone, we are immediately cued to the fact that much of the religious ideology strikes particularly at the institutions of marriage and family, or more precisely, insofar as the religion attacks all aspects of worldly existence, it does so through an attack on marriage and family.

(33)

According to Buddhism, the renunciation of worldly activities is the way of salvation. One should remain celibacy and abstention from sexual relations. This ideology is generated from the religion, particularly at the institutions of marriage and family. As a result the Western writers create propaganda and try to misrepresent the cultural practices, to impose the cultural hegemony in the Eastern society likewise, Ortner does in her text.

There are different types of proverbs that are popular among the Sherpas. There are good and bad force, the bad force is disruptive force represented by demons. All the evil forces are chased away by the Lamas with the help of mantra. The *Gyepshi* rite is an orthodox exorcism. Even Ortner sees problem and barbarism in practicing exorcism. The exorcism is the religious or spiritual practice of purportedly evicting demons or other spiritual entities from a person or an area they are believed to have possessed. The Sherpa people lavish the demons by valuable, beautiful and tasty offerings to pacify them rather than to threaten them. Demons are insatiably greedy, vicious and predatory creatures who roam the world causing troubles such as illness, death, corruption and destruction. They are everywhere in the world. In Buddhist ideology, however, the demonic behavior is the behavior of the self. So, the demonic behavior must be driven away. If demons are greedy for material wealth, luxury and satisfaction so are the peoples, hence, they are to be

eliminated. There is a belief on reincarnation and sin is common in Sherpa society.

According to Ortner such type of orthodox thinking will support status-quo and ultimately support the uncivilized and stereotypical culture. The lines of the proverb are taken from the text *Sherpas through their Rituals* to support the argument:

If you plough now, in the next life you will be beaten by ox, or else you will be an ox. If you kill a goat, in the next life, you will be either be a goat or will be beaten by goat demons. Similarly, if you smoke, you will be reborn in hell with an inextinguishably burning tree in your stomach. (111)

From the above proverb and myth it depicts that Sherpa people highly believe in supernatural power. They believe in god and religious activities. Their culture is traditional and orthodox. Despite the orthodox thinking and behavior they have diverse type of cultural practices and enjoy their religious ceremony, rituals, festivals and culture. These peoples are happy and proud of having such a diverse type of cultural practices thus, they are keen to preserve their cultural identity.

Meanwhile, there are many negative and positive aspects that must be looked at and critiqued in the text *Sherpas through their Rituals*. It is evident that there are both wonderful anthropological and cultural insights and scholarship in certain areas while there are also faults and possible misrepresentations of meaning in other parts. For instance, the evidence supplied in the ethnography for the gods being angered by the offering rituals is Ortner's own somewhat imaginative conclusion, one which she herself admits is somewhat speculative, or merely deductive. To support this view the lines from the text *Sherpas through their Rituals* depict as; "The textual basis on which much of the theory of anger are gained is only part of one (selective) translation by Waddell of hymn or mantra to Drolma (Tara) in which the goddess's wrathful and protective (takbu) aspects is evoked" (150). These lines show that the meaning given by Ortner is not

universal, the tendency of shifting the meaning of the native word illustrates that the native terms, language and culture is manipulated by the Western scholars hence, it has political interest and highly manipulative. The meaning of native terms are twisted and misrepresented.

The East is also misrepresented in the paintings, literature and art. The paintings of the Eastern civilization, culture and traditions were reflected or portrayed negatively. Mainly the Western artists reflected their biased and stereotypical gaze in their paintings. Even the artists were racist and guided by the Western mindset and tilted perception. The early Orientalism can be seen in European paintings and photographs and also in images from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The paintings created by European artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, depict the Arab World as an exotic and mysterious place of sand, harems and belly dancers, reflecting a long history of Orientalist fantasies. In this regard, Said states in his famous book *Orientalism* as:

In newsreels or news-photos, the Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad. Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world. (191)

The paintings, literature and art contain lots of stereotypical and queer images of the Eastern people, culture and society. Therefore, as being a Western intellectual Ortner also depicts the stereotypical and queer images in her research work or text. The photographs and paintings of the Sherpa people are portrayed as uncivilized, barbaric and queer something like odd type. One of the photographs taken by her is of *Cherenzi*, a local god worshipped in Sherpa community (34). Said challenges the hierarchy whereas, Ortner tries to create the hierarchy. The Western and European phenomena can be seen in her

research findings. Said argues that the West is in trouble because they think that the Eastern or Orient people will take over the world.

Likewise, the dresses, customs are also shown as uncivilized and traditional. The images and photographs are something like strange and queer. These types of portrayal of negative images about the East and Orient show the superiority of the West. The colonial legacy still can be seen in the paintings and photographs that reflect their political interest. Ortner misrepresented the Sherpa culture in her photographs and try to derail the cultural importance. The representation of Sherpa culture, people in her painting creates the binary opposition between the West and the East. The West tries to portray the Orient people and culture as “other” and “strange” hence; Ortner did the same thing in her text by representing negatively and stereotypically.

However, Ortner misrepresented the cultural practices of Sherpa people from the lens of Western ideology. She views such cultural practices as barbaric, uncivilized and stereotypical. The misconception of the representation has some political motives and interests of the West. As Said argues, Orientalism provided a rationalization for European colonialism based on a self made history in which “the West” constructed “the East” as they are extremely different and inferior, and therefore we see there is Western intervention in their internal affairs, which is an indirect form of hegemony. The Eastern culture is depicted as an exotic and mysterious, reflecting a long history of Orientalist fantasies. Likewise, in the text *Sherpas through their Rituals* the Sherpa culture is depicted as exotic and mysterious with full of orthodox beliefs, which is just a historical fantasy of an Orientalist to create a huge cleavage between the West and the East. The “othering” and “marginalizing” tendency has certain interest upon the Orient countries. More specifically, in the name of religion, culture, tradition and so forth, the West

remains in center and the East in the margin as an Orientalist constructs the stereotypical images.

Moreover, the textual arrangement is good in *Sherpas through their Rituals*. Ortner has included Sherpas' concepts, proverbs, myths, legends and native terms. All arguments of the text are essentially relevant, sequentially presented and there is an excellent theoretical interpretation. But the excessive use of local Sherpa language without proper analysis of local terms has added a problem in understanding. In her research work the native terms are explained and analyzed by the writer of the text. As we know Ortner is Western scholar and does not know about the terms and conditions of Sherpa language properly. The research findings and conclusion made by her may not be appropriate and valid. Specifically, Said argues that Orient countries have diverse culture and civilization. All the native terms, cultures and languages may not be known by the researchers but the researchers dare to explain these native terms in pejorative and parochial way. This is one kind of cultural intervention by the Western scholars, the persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab, Orient, Islamic peoples and their culture. Therefore, the meaning of native terms and language is misled by the so called Western scholars.

There are some methodological drawbacks in spite of good arrangement of photographs, drawings, verbal dialogue, dialects etc. representing various facts. There is no clear cut methodology, so that graphical interpretation could not be found. Ortner's cultural interpretation or analysis of Sherpa culture from an internal or emic view is not possible by using traditional scientific methods of systematic observation, data collection and hypothesis testing. The account of ritual scenes does not provide evidence for their alleged functions. Ortner presents no data about changes in attitudes or actions about transformations of culture. The claims are simply stated and restated, again and again.

She could have shown some examples of where and how disorder was resulted due to less acts of hospitality and again solidarity was maintained through rituals.

Similarly, there are other weaknesses in Ortner's research work. For example, viewing Sherpa society only through their rituals perspective can neither be understood at microscopic level nor can one analyze Sherpa social cultural life in broader sense or at macro level. For instance, Stevens Stanley studied the Sherpa society with the help of human ecological perspectives. His analysis focused on the Sherpa subsistence with the change in the environmental conditions. Hence, analysis of Sherpa society only through their ritual is not enough to open the Sherpa society in the comprehensive or broader sense. Ortner remarks that Sherpa people are antisocial, they exhibit antisocial tendencies. This conclusion made by her is again guided by the Western mindset as Orient people are antisocial, barbaric, savage and uncivilized. This perspective is preconceived notion about the Orient people and culture to dominate and underscore. Hence, there is misrepresentation of Sherpa culture and stereotypical portrayal of the Sherpa and Orient culture.

Although, the magnificent theoretical concept about Orientalism, Said is critiqued by many critics because he ignored the genuine contributions to the study of Eastern cultures made by Westerners. He confronted with profound criticism, one of the critics Bernard Lewis critiques in his scholarly writing. A historian and critic of Said's theory Bernard Lewis argues that Said's analysis have factual, methodological, and conceptual errors. According to him Said did not see the intellectuals' assistance in the research of Orient culture and civilization. Only negative aspects are indicated rather than accepting the genuine contributions given by the Western scholars. Hence, he claims that Said ignores many genuine contributions to the study of Eastern cultures made by Westerners during the Enlightenment and Victorian eras.

Said's theoretical base does not explain why the French and English pursued the study of Islam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, long before they had any control or hope of control in the Middle East. He has been criticized for ignoring the contributions of the Italians and the Dutch, and also of the massive contribution of German scholars. Lewis claims that the scholarship of these nations was more important to European Orientalism than the French or British, but the countries in question either had no colonial projects in the Middle East, or no connection between their Orientalist research and their colonialism. Said's theory also did not explain why much of Orientalist study did nothing to advance the cause of imperialism.

Unlike, Edward Said, Ortner portrays negative, stereotypical and queer images of the Eastern culture, particularly the misrepresentation of the Sherpa culture and civilization. In most of the cases her research is influenced by the monolithic perspective and misconception about the Sherpa culture. However, there are critics of Said's theoretical concept; therefore, the positive things are also included by Ortner in her research work. Specifically, she creates the many genuine contributions to the study of Eastern cultures especially for the Sherpa culture and tradition. Due to the lack of the funds, resources and intellectuals the Nepalese scholars are unable to do research in depth level. There are so many Western scholars doing their research work in the Eastern society and culture. The objectives of such research are to make the cultural studies as a strong part of the academia. Here, Ortner is Western intellectual, although she is guided by the monolithic and reductive vision of the West; although the Western researchers are politically motivated, she has contributed a lot to find the genuine cultural practices of the Sherpas. In her profound and deep research she has strong determination and passion to unfold the Sherpa cultural practices into the wider horizon and external world or to the Western academia. Therefore, the Orient culture can be a part of the Western universities.

The argument of Said is not applicable in each and every case. No doubt the Western intellectuals have some self interest; no doubt they try to misrepresent the Orient culture and people, no doubt they have racist vision and legacy of superiority but they also try to give genuine contributions in cultural studies. In every aspect there are positive and negative things. Likewise, in the research done by the Western scholars have biased perspective, stereotypical gaze and Eurocentric view upon the Orient, in the same case they give contributions in finding the valid and credible research work. These scholars try to find out the hidden cultural aspects of the Eastern people. In this way the Orient people are represented in their research work. If we look from Said's theoretical tool we see the cultural domination, uncivilized people and stereotypical representation of the Western intellectuals. But if we look from the critics view point we see the genuine contributions of the Western scholars, which makes the strong foundation in the field of cultural studies.

To wrap up, the current research work explores the misrepresentation of Sherpa culture and its identity. The text *Sherpas through their Rituals* is entirely a cultural text. The main objective of this paper is to reveal the hidden cultural aspects and how the Sherpa and Orient culture is misrepresented. The research explores the biased perception of the writer. The text *Sherpas through their Rituals* commences with brief descriptions by the ethnographer and author Sherry B. Ortner on the Sherpa areas of Nepal. The central body of the text consists of chapters on specific rituals and identity in which the particulars of the auspicious occasions are explained in detail, after which she commences to interpret these data in terms of other underlying factors using structural analysis as a major framework to meet these ends.

The fictional representation of Orient culture and civilization, more specifically, the culture of Sherpa is perceived as patronizing and stereotypical way. A huge

misconception and preconceived notion of the West about the Orient and Sherpa people as well as harsh images of Islam is represented by an Orientalist. Their belief system, the way these people act, even though if the Westerners have not experienced the Eastern culture anymore and they try to misrepresent it as barbaric, alien, uncultured and uncivilized. The West treats these people by the virtue of the color of skin. This research paper explores that why the West has still racist view, stereotypical images upon the East and why they developed a preconceived notion about these lands and the culture even though they do not know personally about these Orient cultures. The monolithic and reductive depiction of the Eastern culture reflects the certain interest of the West, therefore it is highly motivated.

Moreover, the West and the US looks upon the countries of the Orient and Middle East as uncivilized and barbaric and distorts the actual reality of these places and these people. Therefore, the cultures of the Eastern countries are understood as unfamiliar, uncivilized, barbaric and stereotypical. Due to the lack of proper analysis of the native terms such as language, myth, images etc. Ortner draws the conclusion that Sherpa culture is problematic culture. Furthermore, the research was done only in particular region of Nepal hence, her idea, concepts and interpretation cannot be generalized and valid to all the Sherpa communities. Some Sherpas are ultra modern those who reside in the city area, they are adopting hybrid form of culture. But Ortner's analysis could not include the changing trends of Sherpas. According to her the Sherpas still believe in orthodox tradition and culture that supports to remain in status-quo, so the conclusion made by her is inappropriate and unauthentic. The meaning of the native terms are derailed and misrepresented.

Despite the excellent theoretical interpretation there are some methodological shortcomings. Ortner's cultural interpretation of Sherpas by the Western lens is

unauthentic. Basically, Ortner sees problem in the Sherpa and Orient culture. She views problem in marriage, religion and festivals. This is monolithic explanation because she sees Sherpa people as full of competitions and tensions but Sherpas enjoy it. Therefore, though *Sherpas through their Rituals* gives complete cultural insights to the Western academia, it is explained from the Western mindset. The stereotypical images and cultural misconception is represented. While analyzing from the lens of Edward Said's theory the researcher comes to the conclusion that still the West has racist view upon the Orient. The actual reality is misrepresented in unilateral way. This is a kind of Western superiority and legacy because the West has certain interest in politics, resources and tries to hegemonize the Orient people.

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