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The Legacy of the Hippie Trail in Nepal. A Memory Studies Perspective

MOKSLO TIRIAMOJO DARBO PROJEKTAS

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The paper examines the object of memory processes of the Hippie Trail in Nepal from the beginning of the phenomenon at the opening of the country in the 1950s to the present, focusing on the perspective of local residents. The complex phenomenon of the Hippie Trail depicts the migration of representatives of Western countercultures to Asian countries among which Nepal became one of the main destinations of the Trail. Thus, the paper aims to analyse how the Hippie Trail developed and from various counterculture movements as well as what memory it left among Nepali people. Additionally, it aims to investigate the phenomenon manifestations through its symbolism in contemporary Nepal. The study uses an interdisciplinary, complex methodology, which includes qualitative methods, such as: detailed life history-type interviews and (non-)visual ethnographic material analysis. A wide range of theories of memory studies and the dimension of post-colonial studies become main theoretical approaches of the research. The analysis traced the complex Easternisation of the hippie counterculture that paradoxically became the main Westernisation carrier in Nepal during the Hippie Trail. It also showed that in nowadays Nepal the Hippie Trail symbols manifests through two main currents: commercial and political reproduction of memories.

The paper could be useful for analysing the impact of Hippie Trail in Nepal through memory and postcolonial perspectives as well as to studying the oral histories of both senior and younger generation of Nepali people. Moreover, study touches gender issues of the Hippie Trail that could be developed in more extensive research in gender studies field.

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INTRODUCTION

An overland journey, known as the Hippie Trail taken by mainly young counterculture representatives from the West, took place from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. It was a significant phenomenon of the time as it represented a rejection of mainstream Western values and a desire for freedom, exploration, and alternative lifestyles¹ (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 4-7).

The route started in Europe and passed through Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and further East. The Hippie Trail was also a time of political and cultural upheaval, as many of these young travellers were influenced by anti-war, countercultural movements and saw their journey as a form of political protest (Kozak 2018, Maclean 2007). As the researchers of the Hippie Trail phenomenon argue: “Put simply, they travelled between the Age of Imperialism and the Age of Islamophobia; they were not aiming to build empires, to exploit natives, to convert non-believers or to wage war on terror. Their travels could be seen as the largest, longest pacifist demonstration in history.” (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 27). The Trail was a new form of travel for a generation who sought a new way of thinking without borders created by racial and social prejudice. As Rory Maclean noted, these travellers were: “The first movement of people in history traveling to be colonized rather than to colonize.” (Maclean, 2006).

Not only was the hippie trail significant in exchanging cultural values and traits, but it was also a notable economic and social phenomenon. For example, the economic impact on the countries along the route, with the influx of travellers provided a boost to local economies and helped to develop tourism in these regions (Türktarhan et al. 2022, 87-89). This allowed for the growth of new forms of tourism, such as backpacker tourism, which catered to the needs and budget of young travellers (ibid.).

While research on hippies is abundant, a few studies have examined the hippie counterculture through the phenomenon of the Hippie Trail. Other research on the Trail has mainly focused on the cases of Afghanistan and India, although it is notable that Nepal in particular has also been one of the most popular locations for hippies to stay throughout Asia (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 4; Kafle 2020). This paper offers a unique lens which captures the Nepali perception and memories of the influx of Western Hippie Trail travellers in Nepal.

The rise and fall of the Hippie Trail period in Nepal. Due to the abstract nature of the Hippie Trail, there are no precise dates that mark the beginning and end of the movement. However, to make study

¹ The ideas of mid-20th century writers and philosophers such as Alan Watts, Timothy Leary, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg about the philosophy of travel and the popularisation of Buddhism, as well as the constant and controversial US intervention in war zones, encouraged young people to question the values of Western modernism and turn to the East. It was the Hippie Trail that became the physical phenomenon of this East-West experience. In the Trail, new theories of transnationalism and cultural hybridity were reflected (Ireland 2018; Lutfi 2015, 49-51; Williams 2007).

easier to comprehend I have chosen to analyse the period starting with the Delhi Accord of 1951 signed between the Nepali Congress and the Rana rulers, which led to the end of Rana autocracy and the restoration of the Shah monarchy. The agreement granted greater political power to the king and paved the way for democratic reforms (Hindustan News Correspondent 2022; Levi 1953). The reforms, along with the rule of the Shah dynasty greatly influenced the opening up of Nepal, as a result of which foreigners began to flock to the country. Additionally, in 1951 traveller and entrepreneur from Odessa Boris Lissanevitch opened the first hotel in Nepal, “The Hotel Royal”, in a converted Rana Palace with Prince Basundhara as his business partner (Peters 2021; Liechty 2017). Due to the liberal laws surrounding the cultivation and sale of psychoactive substances in the mid-20th century, many hippies settled in Kathmandu and started to set up various shops as well as to spread Western hippie symbols and drug culture (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 27).

In my research, I have chosen to identify at least a partial end of the Hippie Trail era in the second half of the 1970s, when, under US pressure, the Nepali government adopted the infamous War on Drugs, as a result of which many drugs were strictly banned in Nepal, and many hippies fled to India or other countries (Kafle 2020; LoBianco 2016). Moreover, due to revolutions and wars in the Middle East in the late 1970s, the famous overland route of the Hippie Trail became impossible. However, their legacy in Kathmandu is still most visible today with the survival of Freak Street and its hippie style in the heart of Nepal's capital (Kafle 2020).

Purpose and objectives of the research - many researchers who examined the phenomenon of Hippie Trail adopted the perspective of the Western travellers themselves. Methods such as interviews and analysis of traveller memoirs provide a thorough explanation of the motivations and experiences of Hippie Trail participants. Yet, I find there is a lack of research done concerning the perspectives of the inhabitants of Hippie Trail destinations. Thus, **the aim** of the work is to examine the impact Hippie Trail left on the memory of the Nepali. **The research problem** is identified as follows: how is the memory of the Hippie Trail in Nepal perceived by the Nepali and how is it reflected in present-day Nepal?

I set the following **objectives** to solve the research problem:

- 1) To describe and evaluate the theoretical frameworks of the memory studies in relation to the topic.
- 2) To analyse the historical and cultural aspects of hippies and Hippie Trail in relation to countercultures and easternisation processes.
- 3) To trace the historical background of Nepal in the second half of the 20th century that led the country to become one of the main Hippie Trail destinations.

- 4) To explore the local perspective on the Hippie Trail legacy in Nepal through life history interviews with witnesses from the Hippie Trail era, using a memory perspective while considering the nuanced gender dynamics.
- 5) to investigate the Hippie Trail manifestations through its symbolism and opinions from the younger generation of locals in contemporary Nepal.

Structure of the research. The entire work is divided into four main parts. The first part is the theoretical methodological part. Taking into account the specifics of the work, the concepts of memory studies are divided into four separate sections with the help of visual examples of Hippie Trail in Nepal. First, I analyse current theories of memory creation and discuss both collective and individual memory, as well as their overlap. Here I also present the term of cultural memory which is rather institutionalised memory. In the second section I analyse the media, sites and symbols of memory, which are crucial while examining the visual material in the research. The third section is devoted to explaining and applying the concepts of prosthetic memory and commodification of memory developed by Alisa Landsberg. Lastly, in the fourth section I present the discourse of postcolonial studies. I choose to use it to understand one of the main aspects of the Hippie Trail, i.e., the Westernisation of Nepal. Here I also present concepts of gaze, mimicry, ambivalence and affirmative orientalism.

The second part analyses the concept of counterculture and the origins of Hippie Trail. The analysis uses secondary sources of counterculture movements around the world from the early 19th to the mid-20th century. In the first section, I trace the early influences on the hippie movement in Western society. Further on, I explain the tendencies of Western countercultures fascination with the Eastern cultures and religions that led to overlanding in Asian countries. The third section is dedicated to examining the role of Nepal in the Hippie Trail.

In the third part, I start to analyse my primary sources, which consist of gathered life-history interviews with my older generation respondents. The first section provides detailed descriptions of each respondent, which help to understand interviewees' backgrounds as well as their connection to Hippie Trail in Nepal. Due to the particularly extensive memories of the respondents, I decided to simplify the analysis by dividing the gathered memories into two periods: the early and late Hippie Trail. Such a choice emerged naturally after I identified that all the interviewees recognised similar periods in the Hippie Trail. In the analysis of their memories, I also provide additional facts that not only add the historical context but also bridge the individual and collective memory of the Hippie Trail in Nepal.

The fourth and final part, which is divided into three sections with two additional sub-sections, is mainly devoted to the analysis of the present Hippie Trail manifestations in Nepal. Apart from

secondary sources and gathered visual material of hippie counterculture symbols, I use 4 additional life-history interviews with the younger generation to enrich the perceptions of Hippie Trail nowadays. In the first section, I will further explain how the Hippie Trail spread from Kathmandu to Pokhara, another major city in Nepal. Here, I also present the perspective of a local resident, related to hippie tourism. The second section examines the gender issues of the Hippie Trail. An interview with a female Nepali rockstar provides a critique of Hippie Trail romanticisation, as captured in the previous chapter. In its sub-section, I introduce a rarely used term *hippini* in the context of a female Nepali hippie representative. In the third section, I analyse the Hippie Trail symbolism in contemporary Nepal. Here add two sub-sections that capture two Nepali respondents who both own hippie symbolism related businesses. Here, I single out the example of one businessman respondent reflects on his own understanding of Hippie Trail symbolism relating it to Westernisation in general. The second businessman respondent leads a social movement seeking to restore the legalisation of cannabis in Nepal while using Hippie Trail symbols. Finally, I present the conclusions, where I briefly assess the Hippie Trail legacy in Nepal and provide reflections on its significance as well as ideas for further research on the topic.

Research methodology. The work employs an interdisciplinary complex methodology. It combines a historical perspective and a post-colonial discourse, through which I highlight the importance of the Hippie Trail period in modern Nepal. For the investigation of the memory of the Trail, I chose to rely heavily on oral stories told by locals. In my opinion, such a method is particularly important in order to understand the connection between secondary sources about the Hippie Trail and real experiences. Thus, with the 7 gathered life-history interviews, I aim to reveal how the Hippie Trail is remembered among the older generation of Nepali. Specifically, the people who witnessed the Hippie Trail period and actively engaged with newcomers from Western counterculture. Additionally, as more and more people who lived through the Hippie Trail era are no longer with us, it is especially important to capture and preserve their authentic memories.

Further, I add the analysis of 4 more interviews with the younger generation which helps to understand the perspective of those who have not witnessed the Hippie Trail period but are influenced by it nowadays. All 11 interviews were collected in the period from February 1, 2023, to June 22, 2023. The interviews were conducted in the English language. I selected the interviewees primarily through “snowball” sampling. One interview was conducted online as the respondent lives in the USA. The rest of the interviews were collected face-to-face in the cities of Kathmandu and Pokhara. 7 older of the respondents were born between 1945 and 1956, with an average age of 73,4 years. The remaining four respondents, born between 1968 and 1982, have an average age of 49 years. The latter four feel heavily influenced by the Hippie Trail era, which reflects in their lives and activities. Out of eleven respondents, only one is a woman. This result is particularly influenced by the relatively

patriarchal society that prevailed in the 20th century, due to which women participated much less than men in the cultural and political life of the country.

Additionally, during my stay in Nepal from January 27, 2023, to July 23, 2024, I travelled extensively and collected material during my visits in three different cities in Nepal: Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Pokhara. In the cities I captured the symbols of the Hippie Trail that are now reproduced in the public spaces (such as streets, walls, decorations, businesses' placards, menus). Finally, I kept a personal journal throughout the field research and recorded my observations that I intend to incorporate into the research.

Ethics. Throughout the work, I closely follow ethical guidelines, ensuring that all research participants clearly understand their role and formally agree to the predetermined publicity of the research. I also ensure that the rights and dignity of all research participants are respected and that no harm is caused to the participants or the physical locations involved. Before each interview, a form was signed by me and the interviewee with an agreement to use the recorded parts of the interview, including the mentioned names, ages and occupations for research related and other educational purposes.

Reflection. In anthropological research, it is particularly difficult to talk about objectivity, therefore, the reflective subjectivity of the researcher must be captured throughout the research. The relatively large age difference between myself and the participants could have complicated an already complex process of trust-building. However, my previous experience in anthropological research involving senior people had helped me to develop specific communication skills and self-confidence. I had also worked with stigmatised groups, such as people who use psychoactive substances, so knowing the terminology helped me to gain better understanding with the research participants. However, I do not deny that I was likely to encounter my own personal unconscious stereotypes. My amateur skills in Hindi language helped me to better understand the interview participants since there are a number of similarities between the Nepali and Hindi languages. Although I managed to have a fairly high-quality conversation in English with all interview respondents, yet my lack of knowledge of the local tongue somewhat reduced the possibility of gaining more important insights. Keeping a regular diary and tracking my flow of thoughts about the research helped me to reflect on my experiences throughout the research. In addition, travelling throughout the country and capturing visual material also contributed to this process.

A review of related research and bibliography. I see the relatively new set of theories in memory studies as not only suitable but also highly interesting in approaching my topic. Jan and Aleida Assmanns, considered to be some of the most important theorists of collective memory with such works as "Transformations between History and Memory" (2008) and "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity" (1995). Aleida focuses on how collective memory creates a sense of community

(Assman 2008, 55-57). Researcher also emphasises the role of cultural phenomena, shared history and memory in the formation of collective identity (ibid.), making his contribution particularly relevant to the case study of the Hippie Trail.

Jan Assmann distinguishes between collective memory and cultural memory. Collective memory often refers to the informal, everyday transmission of memories within small groups and families, while cultural memory is the more formal, institutionalised, and public form of remembering that involves shared symbols, rituals, and narratives (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995) and, therefore, extremely useful for the Hippie Trail case study. The mentioned symbols can be examined through Nora *lieux de mémoire* (eng.: *sites of memory*) lens which serve as a prime illustration of a mnemohistorical approach (Nora 1989, 18-22; Erll 2011, 23). Sites may encompass not only symbols or symbolic gestures, but also structures, monuments, artworks, and historical figures (ibid.). To explain a mnemohistorical approach in more detail, I have chosen to include the book "Memory in Culture" written by Astrid Erll (2011), one of the most famous memory studies researchers of our time. In this book, Erll explores the significance of memory studies, emphasising the intersection of memory and culture, presenting not only the main schools of memory studies development, but also her own insights as a researcher. I would like to note that a particularly suitable section of memory studies is presented in the chapter on media and memory, where the author delves into how various forms of media, such as literature, film, and digital platforms, shape and mediate our collective and individual memories. Erll discusses how media not only reflects but also actively participates in the construction and preservation of cultural memories. Understanding the relationship between media and memory is crucial in unravelling the complex ways in which societies engage with their past.

I also have chosen to use the prosthetic memory concept put forth by Alison Landsberg (2004) in expanding the awareness of the role of technology in the creation of memory. I plan to use this concept in analysing past and present media, including news articles and movies that fundamentally alter people's notion of what counts as experience. Prosthetic memory becomes especially important while analysing younger generation thoughts on Hippie Trail and its manifestations in current Nepal since many of the younger generation do not have direct ties with Hippie Trail.

While understanding the role of Nepal in the context of Hippie Trail, I analyse why Nepal has become an exceptional Hippie Trail destination. Here I use the works of famous cultural anthropologist specialising in the Nepal region Mark Liechty, explaining the perception of the Himalayan region and especially Nepal in the western imagination (Liechty 2003, 2017). Liechty's works also help to understand the significant impact of the Hippie Trail on the region affecting various spheres (economically, politically, socially and individually).

I want to point out that there is a considerable lack of an academic perspective towards the locals among whom the Western participants of the Hippie Trail travelled or stayed for decades. Yet,

it is important to review and understand the papers focusing on the Western Hippie Travelers themselves. I would like to highlight “The Hippie Trail. A History” book written by Brian Ireland and Sharif Gemie (2018). This work is divided into 3 different sections: drugs, free love and discussions about the concepts of tourist, traveller and pilgrim among the participants of Hippie Trail. Most importantly, authors not only give broad analysis of a great number of secondary sources but are also using extensive analysis of interviews held with 80 Western men and women who between 1957 and 1978 travelled the Trail. This work will give a good perspective of how the travellers of the Hippie Trail behaved, what they experienced, and how they remember their encounters with Asian cultures, before I explore the point of view of the locals.

Additionally, I would like to mention another book that focuses more on the local aspects influenced by Western cultural factors from 1950-1970, including those related to the Hippie Trail, than on the travellers of the Hippie Trail themselves. “Hinduism and the 1960s The Rise of a counterculture” (2014) by Paul Oliver examines Western interest in South Asian religion and culture since the 19th century, starting with the theosophical movements, and analyses how this particularly Western interest started to impact local culture. The author moves forward through the decades and observes how Hinduism in India changed after the contact with Western counterculture during the Hippie Trail. Since the Hippie Trail processes as well as Hinduism religion and culture is somewhat similar in Nepal, this book provides a solid foundation for examining the legacy of the Hippie Trail from a local culture point.

The novelty of the research. The aspects of the topic I choose to examine, such as art, psychoactive substances and gender, were chosen naturally, after noticing their recurrence during the ethnographic field research. By focusing on the perspectives of Nepali residents, it sheds light on previously overlooked local viewpoint aspects of the Hippie Trail. The interdisciplinary approach, integrating qualitative methods and theoretical frameworks from memory studies and postcolonial studies, contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of memory formations and cultural exchange.

1. INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PARTS OF RESEARCH

In this part, I will look at what theoretical approaches will be used in the work. This includes four main concepts that I chose to elaborate while delving into the Hippie Trail period: collective and individual memory; memory sites and media; prosthetic memory and, lastly, postcolonial discourse. Memory studies, the theoretical approach I emphasise most, has gained significant traction in contemporary discourse across various academic disciplines and societal domains. Its multidisciplinary nature integrates elements from sociology, philosophy, history, literary and art history, media studies, psychology, neuroscience, etc.

While reading various papers on memory studies, I noticed that a number of approaches in this relatively young discipline leads to somewhat scatteredness of schools. I would single out one of the aspects of the history of memory studies field as a rather slow international dialogue between various schools of memory studies in different countries. It took nearly half a century for the main books of Maurice Halbwachs, one of the pioneers of modern sociological and cultural studies of memory and a French sociologist and philosopher, to be translated. Such classic work as "*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*" (1925) did not appear in the English language until 1996 in "On collective memory". A similar thing happened to some of the most important German memory researchers, Aleida and Jan Assmann, whose book "*Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*" (1992) was translated only in 2011 under the English title "Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination". Because of the fact that it took so long for important works to reach a wider audience in other countries, a quite asymmetrical discourse on memory studies internationally has developed (Erl, 2010).

Such a historical aspect can lead to a "reinvented wheel" of different concepts of memory studies in different countries as well as inconsistent development of memory studies disciplines. However, in my work I intend to use a range of different memory studies theories and terms, as they all augment each other in analysing different aspects of the broad topic of the Hippie Trail. Additionally, in the last section of this chapter I will also elaborate some of the key postcolonial concepts which will help to explain the interactions between Westerners and Easterners. Theories and concepts here will be examined with the help of relevant examples which will accordingly broaden and deepen the further analysis of the collected data.

1.1 Memory: Between Individual and Collective

Since my work involves ethnographic gathering of both individual and collective memory, I will first provide some different approaches to these two mentioned dimensions. In order to

understand the relationship between individual and collective memory, it is important to discuss the Halbwachs approach analysed by Nicolas Russell. According to him, there is never any entirely individual memory (Russell 2006). Even if you experience something on your own, it is always socially shaped. For example, if one has an experience of going to an attic room alone, the feelings that emerge are socially shaped as the construct of the attic room usually echoes the myths and stories of ghosts or other mythical creatures, which are not an independent memory of the past (ibid.). Yet, many thinkers also emphasise the importance of individual memory. Perhaps, one of the more famous and quite opposite remarks on the individual aspect of memory was written by an American intellectual Susan Sontag: "All memory is individual, unreproducible - it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, that this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings". (Sontag 2003, 85-86). Although I would not dismiss the collective memory aspect, it is necessary to note that individual, or more specifically, autobiographical memory is crucial for personality development. According to Aleida Assman, verbalising or representing memories integrates them into shared narratives or images, subject to collective interpretation (Assman 2008, 50-52). The distinction between personal and shared memory blurs as experiences blend with external influences like oral narratives or photographs. It is important to mention that this dynamic interplay between individual and collective memory shapes both personal identity and shared understanding. Aleida Assman draws attention to when explaining the connection between individual and group memories, is identity. The social animal aspect accompanies us throughout our lives which follows the statement that people are no less an "I" than a "we" form of life (ibid.).

What is more, Assmann describes the collective memory as emerging from everyday interactions, focusing on historical experiences of contemporaries within a shifting temporal horizon (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995). It is rather a short term type of memory that extends no more than a person's lifetime. In contrast, cultural memory is rather institutionalised, tied to media, material objectifications and forms the collective identity of a society through stabilised texts, images, and rituals (ibid.). It is a long term type of memory that reaches the first recorded history thousands of years ago. Cultural memory reconstructs the past retrospectively and relies on trained specialists for interpretation, thus fostering a clear system of values for the group. The distinction between cultural and collective memory depends on the consciousness of time and the chosen mode of remembering within a community (Erl 2011, 28-32). Collective memory might involve personal stories shared among locals on the Hippie Trail era that involves western travellers' narratives, values and mainstream culture. Since there are fewer and fewer people who witnessed Hippie Trail in Nepal,

collective memory slowly becomes more of a cultural memory, when the younger generation inherits certain memory aspects from seniors. Hippie culture still endures in certain areas in Nepal, such as Jhochhen Tole — one of the main streets in Kathmandu, more commonly known as *The Freak Street* (Illustration No. 1). The term *freak* reflects the Western hippie-related subculture that once resided in this area. Nowadays such elements of cultural memory are preserved through artefacts, art, music and names that could be observed and passed on new generations

Both individual and collective memories are incomplete, dynamic and ever-changing. The individual one is particularly unstable. Even the same person's memory changes over the years as it is constantly created and re-created. This is well illustrated by a study that analysed data collected from the memories of the survivors of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and a marked significant change in individual memories (Hirst et. al 2009). Meanwhile, collective memory, although somewhat more static, is often manipulated. Edward Said, a prominent postcolonial theorist, argued that collective memory, often shaped by dominant narratives and power structures, influences individual perceptions and identities (Said 2000; Hale 2000). Said's work highlighted the importance of challenging hegemonic narratives and reclaiming marginalised or suppressed memories to construct more inclusive and authentic representations of history and identity (ibid.).

In this sense, I advocate for a critical engagement with both individual and collective memory, recognizing their complex and interdependent relationship within broader socio-political contexts. Only a careful analysis of interplay of both memories can offer a more objective recreation of the past. By following this interplay in the methodological part, I will bring attention to both non-repeating individual memories and recurring collective memories. I will also try to understand the wider historical context for the formation of these memories.

1.2 Media, Sites and Symbols of Memory

The Hippie Trail in Nepal survives not only as institutionalised factual history, but as part of collective memory, an agreed recollection and representation of events based on the perspective of its witnesses. Institutions are also involved in the preservation of collective memory in society. For example, prominent politicians or the media can influence the way we remember and forget events. Here, I highlight the media on which cultural memory relies heavily at both individual and collective levels. It shapes personal memories through various forms of mediation and facilitating the construction and dissemination of shared pasts. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of understanding media as active agent in memory construction, shaping versions of the past and influencing concepts of collective identity, with different modes of remembering closely tied to available media technologies (Han 2023).

Astrid Erll points out mnemonic functionalization that encompasses two fundamental aspects: production-side functionalization and reception-side functionalization (Erll 2011, 124-125). It is derived from Stuart Hall's written concepts of "encoding" and "decoding"². Production-side functionalization refers to the process by which cultural producers, such as media creators or institutions, ingrain content with specific meanings, values, and narratives before disseminating it to the audience (Xie et al. 2022). This process involves deliberate choices regarding how information is presented and framed to shape audience perceptions and interpretations. On the other hand, reception-side functionalization occurs when individuals engage with the encoded content and interpret it based on their own experiences, beliefs, and cultural frameworks. This process involves active interpretation and negotiation of meaning by the audience, influenced by factors such as socio-cultural context, personal background, and ideological perspectives (ibid.). As an example, an advertising campaign "Just Say No", prevalent during the 1980s and early 1990s as a part of the U.S.-led war on drugs, was designed to discourage the use of psychoactive substances and create a negative impression of those who use them. On the other hand, people, depending on their individual positive experiences and perspectives, sometimes evaluated the campaign as short-sighted and reinforcing stereotypes upon various subcultures that are often associated with psychoactive substances such as hippies. In this way, mnemonic functionalization recognizes the dynamic interplay between producers and consumers of cultural content in shaping collective memory and cultural narratives.

Furthermore, it is crucial to understand that media acts on both individual and collective memory levels by shaping personal recollections through various forms of representation and by disseminating versions of shared history and collective experiences to wider audiences, thus influencing perceptions of the past and contributing to the construction of cultural memory. As Astrid Erll puts it: "Although it remains to be seen whether the 'new media' of our present age... have really brought about a qualitative change in cultural memory that radically distinguishes it from all former epochs, what is certainly true is that the age of mass and digital media has sensitised us to the fact that there is no such thing as a pure, pre-media memory, or: the other way round, that all memory, individual and social, is mediated memory." (Erll 2011, 132).

In a way, certain mediated memory can also become both digital and physical *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory and serve as prime illustrations of a mnemohistorical approach, encapsulating the collective memory of interconnectivity between local and counterculture movement (Matos et al. 2014). As an example of such mediation of memory, we can look into the 1971 Bollywood movie "*Hare Ram, Hare Krishna*". The film, directed by Dev Anand, captures the zeitgeist of the Hippie

² Stuart Hall's concepts of "encoding" and "decoding" relate to how messages are created and interpreted in media. "Encoding" is when creators embed meanings into their content, while "decoding" is when audiences interpret these messages based on their own backgrounds and experiences. This process highlights that audience interpretations can vary due to cultural differences, leading to diverse understandings of the same message (Hall 1973).

Trail, particularly its portrayal of disillusioned youth seeking spiritual enlightenment in Kathmandu. The iconic scene of Zeenat Aman's character smoking hashish with Westerners, dancing and singing amidst the backdrop of *Pashupatinath* and other local temples serves as a poignant *lieux de mémoire*, encapsulating the fusion of Eastern spirituality and Western counterculture as well as lasting memory of the era's exploration of identity, rebellion, and transcendence (Illustration No. 2, No. 3, No. 4). Through Nora's lens, the movie itself and the well-known sites depicted there become symbolic sites of memory, preserving and perpetuating the collective imagination and memory of a transformative period in history.

In the following part of the field research analysis, I will present more visual material recorded during the Hippie Trail period. The film "*Hare Ram, Hare Krishna*" becomes a very important example embodying the one of the first and culturally encoded collective memory symbols of the Hippie Trail in Nepal represented in the media. The film nowadays also becomes part of the prosthetic memory of the Hippie Trail, which I will analyse in more detail in the next section.

1.3 Prosthetic Memory and Its Commodification in Hippie Trail

Alison Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory explores the idea that individuals can form memories of events they did not directly experience through mediated representations such as films, literature, or collective cultural narratives. As Landsberg puts it: "Prosthetic memory emerges at the interface of a person and a historical narrative of the past, at an experiential site, such as a movie theatre or a museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history ... In the process the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person's subjectivity and politics." (Landsberg 2004, 2).

This theory holds particular significance in researching the legacy of the Hippie Trail in Nepal as it illuminates how individuals, especially those not present during the era, can develop a sense of connection and belonging to historical events through cultural artefacts and narratives. For instance, the previously mentioned movie "*Hare Ram, Hare Krishna*", serves as a prosthetic memory for audiences, allowing them to vicariously experience the era of the Hippie Trail and its cultural implications. Through such mediated representations, individuals can engage with and internalise the collective memories associated with the Hippie Trail, even if they did not physically participate in the journey themselves. Moreover, not only the visual but also the sound aspect of the film can be considered an important attribute of the prosthetic memory. R. D. Burman composed the iconic one

of the main songs of the film "*Dum Maro Dum*" performed by famous singer Asha Bhosle³. Film and media researcher Carl R. Plantinga (2009; 130-135) argues that the soundtrack of a film primarily causes a direct physiological effect on the audience, embodying moods that make listeners experience certain emotions. The soundtrack is perhaps the most prominent feature of the film and one of the strongest codes that reflects the story and tells the audience how they should respond to the historical phenomenon of Hippie Trail. The repetition of "*Dum Maro Dum*" as a hippie counterculture symbol in contemporary culture is also used in the title of another popular 2011 Bollywood film "*Dum Maro Dum*", which represents the contemporary context of controversial youth counterculture in India. Through their widespread distribution and cultural impact, movie "*Hare Ram, Hare Krishna*" and song "*Dum Maro Dum*" have played a significant role in shaping collective memories of the Hippie Trail in Nepal.

In the context of Landsberg's framework, the movie and especially song became the targets of memory commodification. In other words, commercialization and mass dissemination of memory through popular culture (Landsberg 2018). It is essential to recognize that memory commodification can also lead to oversimplification or romanticization of historical realities (ibid.), potentially glossing over the complexities and diverse experiences of individuals who participated in the Hippie Trail. While "*Hare Ram, Hare Krishna*" and "*Dum Maro Dum*" contribute to the memory of the Trail, they represent just a few angles of a multifaceted phenomenon, highlighting the intersection of popular culture, memory, and historical consciousness. Both the movie and the song threaten to construct a past in rather privately satisfying than publicly objective and useful.

Although most of the interviews that I will analyse in the last chapter of this paper were conducted with people who lived during the peak years of the Hippie Trail, another part of the younger respondents, when telling their life story and the influence of the Hippie Trail, talked about memories that could be considered as prosthetic. Both the prosthetic memory, and memory commodification, shape how history is projected and understood currently. By examining how cultural artefacts representations influence perceptions of the Hippie Trail, I will be able to gain insight into the construction of collective memory and its impact in my respondents' stories and gathered visual material. Implying Landsberg's derived terms will help for a more nuanced interpretation of the Trail's legacy, acknowledging both its cultural significance and potential distortions or simplifications in collective memory.

³ In an attempt to embody the complexity of the Hippie Trail counterculture, the song expresses disillusionment with the world and the pursuit of a hedonistic life, in order to forget, immersed in psychoactive substances. The song also identifies religious motifs, including gods such as Rama and Krishna. "*Dum Maro Dum*" eventually became not only a Bollywood hit, but a well-known song in many countries around the world, associating it with hippie culture and cannabis (Sharma, 2023).

In conclusion, the chapter elucidates the intricate dynamics between individual and collective memory in the context of the Hippie Trail legacy in Nepal. The scholarly debate over the primacy of individual or collective memory highlights the ongoing interplay between personal experiences and shared narratives. Moreover, the distinction between collective and cultural memory, as proposed by Jan Assmann, underscores the evolving nature of memory from everyday interactions to institutionalised forms. Through the lens of Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory, the chapter also explores how mediated representations such as films and songs shape collective memory for further generations and contribute to the commodification of historical events. By integrating these theoretical frameworks, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of memory processes and their implications for the construction of historical consciousness in Nepal.

1.4 Postcolonial Discourse on the Hippie Trail

As mentioned in the title of this work, the main theoretical focus on the topic is through the perspective of memory studies. However, I feel a particular importance to cover at least a small part of the discourse of postcolonial studies in explaining intercultural interactions, because otherwise I would ignore the elephant in the room. One of the most prominent motifs of the Hippie Trail in Nepal is the direct, decades-long dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures. It is important to emphasise that this mass migration was exceptionally significant compared to past movements. As Rory Maclean noted, these travellers were: "the first movement of people in history travelling to be colonised rather than to colonise." (Maclean, 2006). By now, understanding the vast outcomes of such migration, including the spread of Western art and values in Asian countries, it is impossible to say that the Hippie Trail was only about the humble inheritance of Asian cultures without spreading Western influence at the same time (Türkutarhan 2022, 92; Canner 2018). In a way, this influence could be interpreted through a postcolonial lens as the Western imagination creating the mainstream perception of the Orient. As researcher Mark Liechty puts it: "...that the power of the borderland myth rises and falls as powers external to Nepal need such a borderland for their own imaginative and political purposes."; "Since the 1960s Nepal's emergence as an international tourist destination has had a lot to do with the region's ongoing role as imagined mystical borderland" (Liechty 2018). It shows that the motivation for the Westerners to embark on the Hippie Trail, similarly to their colonial ancestors, could have been influenced by simplified and exoticized depictions of the Orient.

Analysing postcolonial theory in the context of the Hippie Trail in Nepal, it is essential to consider the concept of the gaze, as theorised by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and in parallel by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha 1994, 54-56). Theory of the gaze, which views it as a form of objectification and othering, sheds light on the dynamics of perception and representation in

encounters between Western hippies and Nepali locals. As in colonial context, The Western gaze, fueled by desires for spiritual enlightenment and cultural liberation, have exoticized and fetishized Eastern cultures (Frosh 2013). While the Nepali gaze, influenced by mimicry and ambivalence, simultaneously embraced and resisted the influence of Western counterculture.

Hippie Trail travellers largely represented a counterculture movement of the people who often alienated their society's culture and sought radical changes. Many of the mid-20th century Western counterculture pioneers such as Alan Ginsberg or Jack Kerouac, in rejection of Western cultural hegemony, embraced Eastern philosophies like Hinduism or Buddhism (Oliver, 2014, 10-11). By adopting Eastern spiritual practices and ideologies, counterculturalists of the Hippie Trail may have tried to challenge the prevailing Western norms and values. Such a phenomenon urges us to think about Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and ambivalence. Here, mimicry refers to the process by which colonised individuals or groups imitate the cultural practices of the colonisers as a means of gaining acceptance or assimilating into the dominant culture (Bhabha 1994, 85-87). Ambivalence, on the other hand, refers to the simultaneous attraction and repulsion that colonised subjects feel towards the colonising culture. It involves a complex psychological and social desire for inclusion within the dominant culture and resistance against assimilation or domination (ibid.).

On the other hand, following the quote of Maclean that I have mentioned in the beginning of this section, I must admit that from my extensive research on Hippie Trail in Nepal, I have noticed the difference of Hippie Trail in comparison to earlier historical Western influxes towards East. Having in mind Western counterculture essence of the Hippie Trail, I question how much Hippie Trail can be compared to earlier rather colonial clashes between West and East? Thereby, I see a great importance to include a term of *affirmative orientalism* that gives a new perspective in examining Hippie Trail in postcolonial context under less negative light. Richard J. Fox is widely credited with first using the term in 1989 to describe a phenomenon where individuals from Western cultures adopt and romanticise certain aspects of Eastern or non-Western cultures, often in a well-intentioned yet in still superficial manner (King 1999, 84-86). In other words, the term involves Westerners appreciating elements such as spirituality, mysticism, or exoticism of the East while simultaneously overlooking or minimising the complexities and realities of the cultures being appropriated. However, the word *affirmative* gives room to evaluate the influx of Westerners to the East not only from a "Saidian" negative perspective.

The Hippie Trail was largely based on Westerners' positivist admiration for Eastern cultures and religions, leading to their popularity and expansion around the world. Although Edward Said's critic David Kopf (ibid.) made similar claims that debate revolved mainly around classical colonial orientalism, not the movement of Western countercultures towards the East. In my opinion, the affirmative orientalism angle should at least be examined in the context of the Hippie Trail

phenomenon, especially when analysing the retrospective views of local Nepalis on the phenomenon. Additionally, I argue that terms of gaze, mimicry and ambivalence, although usually used from hegemonic Western perspective, in the context of Hippie Trail could be applied to both Eastern and Western sides. The Westerners sympathised and mimicked Eastern religions and philosophies, as a supposedly better alternative to the West. Meanwhile, the locals started imitating the soft culture of the newcomers, creating local psychedelic art, music as well as started questioning local culture values.

In this chapter I have only scratched a wide range of memory and postcolonial studies discourses. Yet, I believe that the main terms I have explained helps to fit the broad topic of the Hippie Trail in Nepal to a framework that is possible to further adequately examine. Also, mentioned theories with illustrative examples as well as postcolonial concepts adds additional context in examination of the development of memory among Nepali. All the insights of this chapter provide useful arguments to be examined once again in the ethnographic field work analysis at the end of this paper. I will further elaborate the dialogue of Western and Eastern cultures during the Hippie Trail while analysing the origins of the hippie movement.

2. THE ORIGINS OF THE HIPPIE COUNTERCULTURE AND THE HIPPIE TRAIL IN NEPAL

In this chapter I will present some of the core understandings related to the term *hippie*. I will also explain counterculture phenomena in the context of 19th and early 20th century European and American movements that directly influenced the hippies. Keeping in mind the connection between the Hippie Trail and the Orient, I will delve into the phenomenon of Western Easternization, following the historical and political context of the rise of Nepal among major Hippie Trail destinations.

2.1 The Formation of the *Hippie* in the Context of Earlier Countercultures

The term *hippie* is a rather broad term describing a certain type of people and their values⁴. An American journalist Warren Hincle was one of the first extensively describing hippie counterculture in his 1967 heavily illustrated article called "The Social History of the Hippies", where he mentioned the term *hippie* over 93 times: "Hippies do not share our written, linear society - they like textures better than surfaces, prefer the electronic to the mechanical, like group, tribal activities. Theirs is an ecstatic, do-it-now culture, and rock and roll is their art form" (Hincle 1967, 19).

For explaining the rather polysemous term *hippie* and especially *Hippie Trail* in my paper, I choose to use the findings of a research done by Sharif Gemie and Brian Ireland (2018). They analysed 80 life stories of Westerners who travelled the Hippie Trail, where the majority of respondents did not identify themselves as Hippies (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 21). They rather chose more narrow counterculture terms such as freaks, beatniks, groovers, nomads, long-hairs, revolutionaries, seekers, etc. (ibid.). Yet, "...the majority conceded that they were called hippies by others, whatever their preference. And, finally, none of them challenged the validity of the term "Hippie Trail"." (ibid. 26).

However, to understand the origins, worldviews and values associated with the word *hippie*, one should delve into earlier influential Western movements that served as predecessors of hippie counterculture. The term *counterculture* was particularly popularised as well as primarily associated with the 1960s movements after the publication of "The Making of a Counter Culture" by Theodore Roszak in 1971 (Campbell 2007, 187). First and foremost, any counterculture movement, including

⁴ Merriam-Webster dictionary provides with rather broad definition of hippie "A usually young person who rejects the mores of established society (as by dressing unconventionally or favouring communal living) and advocates a nonviolent ethic" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). The term historically was derived from the word *hip* which meant "up-to-date" or "fashionable" and was mainly used by African Americans in the 1930s and 1940s (Petruzzello 2017). While in the 1950s and early 1960s hippies used to be called a *hip community* (ibid).

hippies, has an aspect of the rejection of mainstream culture values. It is, of course, a rather broad aspect and such counterculture figures and movements could be found even in ancient history of both East and West. As one of my respondents, Ram Ballav Das - the owner of the "Ramsterdam: Where the Hippies Meet" café-bar in Kathmandu told in the interview: "*Shiva was the first hippie*" (Ram Das Ballav) and later adding the same term while describing Buddha. Ram referred to the historical figure's pursuit of an alternative and rather simplistic way of life, sometimes associated with consumption of cannabis and reminiscent of a hippie lifestyle. One of the earliest ancient Greek outcasts whose simplistic path and emphasis on being a citizen of the world was later popularised and followed was a philosopher Diogenes of Sinope. Paths towards disobeying mainstream culture have been followed by societies through the centuries, but the peculiarities of hippie counterculture have their own direct impacts.

In most research conducted on the topic of hippies, researchers usually firstly emphasise the direct influence of the 19th century German thought of *Naturphilosophie*, and the movement of *Lebensreform* in Europe while in North America they identify American Transcendentalists (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 10-11; Marchant 2018, 20-23). *Naturphilosophie*, which translates to *philosophy of nature*, was a philosophical and scientific movement that emerged in Germany in the early 19th century. It was heavily influenced by the ideas of German Romanticism and emphasised the interconnectedness of all living things and the spiritual significance of nature (Snelders 1970, 213-215). Prominent figures associated with *Naturphilosophie* include Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling. Close to that, *Lebensreform* (also related to *Lebensphilosophie*), meaning "life reform," was a social and cultural movement mainly active in Germany in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a response to the negative effects of industrialization and urbanisation, including pollution, overcrowding, and poor working conditions. *Lebensreform* advocates promoted a variety of lifestyle changes aimed at improving physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (Marchant 2018, 20-23; Algarotti 2012, 91-92). It included vegetarianism, nudism, herbal medicine, and alternative forms of spirituality. Both mentioned German movements followed naturalistic philosophy and attracted individuals who felt alienated by modern society and sought a deeper connection to nature and a more authentic way of living (ibid.).

The ideas of movements were materialised in *Monte Verità* (eng. - "Mountain of Truth") which was a famous commune and cultural centre located in Switzerland, near Ascona. Established in the early 20th century, it became a hub for the *Lebensreform* movement. Founded by a group of artists, intellectuals, and anarchists, including German poet Gustav Gräser, *Monte Verità* became known for its alternative lifestyle, embracing naturism, vegetarianism, and communal living (Kuiper 2013, 465-469). The residents rejected conventional societal norms and sought to cultivate a harmonious relationship with nature. *Monte Verità* attracted individuals from across Europe who were drawn to

its ideals of simplicity, freedom, and spiritual exploration. Among them, one of the widely read and translated European authors of the 20th century was Hermann Hesse whose books influenced the 1950s-1960s counterculture movements as well as increased Western fascination with Eastern religions (Bach 2020, 52-54).

In parallel with the aforementioned European movements, across the Atlantic Ocean, the philosophical, spiritual, and literary movement of American transcendentalism (related to the literary movement of the American Renaissance) started to grow in the 19th century. Key figures of the movement such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Walt Whitman emphasised the importance of self-reliance, individualism, and the pursuit of truth through personal experience and intuition rather than through organised religion or societal conventions (Tuchinsky and Malachuk 2018; Roberson 2013). Transcendentalists rejected the materialism and conformity of mainstream society and advocated for a deep connection to nature, seeing it as a source of spiritual inspiration and moral guidance. They also championed social reform movements, such as abolitionism and women's rights, viewing them as natural extensions of their belief in the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals (ibid.). As a direct influence on mid-20th century activist countercultures, Henry David Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" (2009), where he advocated for nonviolent resistance to unjust laws, inspired generations of activists and protestors (ibid. 437-438). Thoreau's belief in individual conscience and the obligation to resist unjust authority influenced civil rights activists, anti-war protestors, and other countercultural movements (Rajput 2017; Judd 2016).

A particularly widespread description of the counterculture from the middle of the 19th century to the 20th century, which has more or less survived to the present day, was *bohemianism*. Originating in France, this term was often used to refer to representatives of romanticism related literature and the arts who lived and acted with no regard for conventional rules of behaviour (Horne 1982, 9-10, 14). In some regions the *bohemian* meant roaming Romani people, often pejoratively referred to as "gypsies". New streams of art in the late 19th and early 20th century developed new styles that later inspired the counterculture psychedelic art of the 1960s. A few of such were *Art Nouveau* and symbolist movements - a reaction to the perceived alienation and regimentation of an increasingly technocratic society (Montgomery 2020; Duque 2019, 17). It also emphasised on flowing lines, intricate patterns, and organic forms, evoking a sense of natural beauty and spiritual transcendence. The paintings and posters were focused on subjective experience, imagination, and the exploration of altered states of consciousness, reflecting a desire to escape the confines of a rationalistic and materialistic worldview that was echoed in hippie related psychedelic stream (ibid.) that could be seen in (Illustration No. 5, No. 6, No. 7).

Regarding the rapid growth of countercultures in the 1950s and 1960s, it is important to

understand the impact of World War II on Western societies. After the catastrophic consequences of the war, the need for economic and social reconstruction emerged, especially in Europe. Yet, as sociology professor Colin Campbell observes, the generation that survived the Great Depression and war saw no need for cultural reconstruction, because after the rise of dictators, cultural ideologies acquired an unpopular connotation, and after defeating the world threatening fascism, they thought they had already reached the "free world" (Campbell 2007, 189). Meanwhile, the younger generation has not directly faced these adversities (ibid.). As an action to change the status quo, from the end of the 1940s to the late 1960s, a whole range of counterculture groups began to appear: Beatniks, Hells Angels, Hippies, Yippies, Black Panthers, White Panthers, Provos, The Diggers, The Motherfuckers, etc. All of them differed in their manifestations of radicalism and ideology. However, it is not difficult to recognize their common similarity - the desire to reject an established form of hierarchy, authority and the values of the "old generation" (ibid. 187-188).

From a Marxist point of view, the counterculture movement could be seen as mainly a working-class struggle to overthrow bourgeois economic power (Oliver 2014, 5-7). Yet, after World War II in the USA the economy was growing rapidly and there were low numbers of unemployment. Moreover, many of the young people who turned towards counterculture movements were from middle-class families. People no longer had to worry about survival and attention was paid to aspects of public welfare. Right after the war, many former colonies began their struggles for independence, women's, LGBT+ and racial minority movements for equality swept across the globe. The action for freedom and change in societies spread globally (ibid. 4-5). The pursuit of peace became a particularly important aspect for the hippie movement. Growing anxiety about a potential world war between America and the Soviet Union and the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War encouraged pacifism among especially hippie counterculture as well as their criticism towards the government (ibid). Eventually, for many young pacifistic Americans, the Hippie Trail became an escape from the draft for the Vietnam war.

In conclusion, the term *hippie* encompasses a multifaceted countercultural movement characterised by rejection of mainstream societal norms and pursuit of alternative lifestyles often emphasising on peaceful actions. Understanding the origins of hippie counterculture, influenced by earlier movements such as *Naturphilosophie* and American transcendentalism, provides insight into its values and ethos. By critically examining the diverse experiences of individuals involved, we can gain a deeper understanding of the lasting impact of the Hippie Trail in Nepal on both local communities and global culture.

2.2 Easternization of the Hippie

In order to understand the general motivation of the West (not only Americans) to do the Hippie Trail to the East, one must understand the growth of Western admiration for Eastern religions and philosophies. The authors of American transcendentalism I already mentioned were influenced by Hindu and Buddhist texts. For example, Thoreau's work "Walden" (2016) reflects his admiration and deep knowledge of Eastern cultures, by quoting or making allusions to orient scripts, nature and philosophical thoughts numerous times throughout the book (Thoreau 2016, 125, 134, 136-137, 145-146, 241, 392, 417, 427, 425).

At the same time in Europe, apart from pragmatic conquering of the Orient, there was also a growth of spiritual interest. The Theosophical Society (1875): founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott, aimed to explore the mystical and spiritual teachings of the East. After Blavatsky's claim of her journey to Tibet, and an extensive interview in the New York Times, her mystical approach to the Orient grew rapidly, particularly in the U.S.A (Marchant 2018, 216). Her seminal works, articles and speeches synthesised Eastern and Western esoteric traditions and had a significant impact on the "Easternization of the West" (Campbell 2007, 38-41; Marchant 2018, 216).

Easterners themselves also significantly impacted Westerners through their soft culture. A prominent disciple of the Indian mystic Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda delivered a historic speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago (1893). His address introduced Vedanta and Hindu philosophy to a Western audience and sparked widespread interest in particularly South Asian spirituality practices (Campbell 2007, 23). In the 1930s an Indian philosopher and a member of the Theosophical tradition Jiddu Krishnamurti introduced Jnana-Yoga to such well-known Western icons as Charles Chaplin, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood (ibid. 34). By the 1940s, Yoga schools started to appear more and more frequently in the U.S.A. Traditional spiritual practice originating in ancient India, became popularised, commodified, and integrated into mainstream Western culture (ibid. 39-41). The fascination with the East was then taken by the prominent Beat Generation (1940s-1960s) writers such as Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder who immersed themselves into Buddhism practices or Jack Kerouac whose books "On the Road" (1957) and "The Dharma Bums" (1958) with numerous references to Eastern spirituality are considered to be one of the main inspirations for Westerners to take the Hippie Trail towards Asia (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 13-14; (Oliver 2014, 11). In addition, in the late 1960s, a trip to the East was famously illustrated by hippie icons such as The Beatles, Donovan and Mike Love who travelled to an ashram in Rishikesh, India, to study transcendental meditation with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The mystical imagination of Asia, in this context, particularly India and Nepal, for Westerners has its roots in a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and ideological factors. Until the 20th

century, colonialism played a pivotal role in shaping Western perceptions of the East, as European powers sought to exert political and economic dominance over Asian territories. In parallel, it shaped oriental perception, referring to the Western construction of the East as exotic, mysterious, and inherently different from the West. This Orientalist discourse portrayed South Asia as a land of spiritual wisdom, ancient traditions, and mysticism, reinforcing Western fantasies and stereotypes about the region (Liechty 2017; Liechty 2018). Such portrayals became a driving force for those, in particular, who sought to escape the perceived materialism and spiritual bankruptcy of the Western society in search of meaning and transcendence in the East. Yet, according to Edward Said, this romantic idealisation of alien culture often paradoxically worked to validate the culture of colonialists deeply involved with the drive of imperialism (Said 2006, 30-32). A question arises whether the Hippie Trail takers could be described as the representatives of affirmative orientalism. In my opinion, partially, yes, since much of the Hippie Trail was based on putting the values of Eastern cultures and religions higher or at least not lower than Western. To conclude this thought, I would quote Sharif Gemie and Brian Ireland: "...the hippies' apoliticism may well have been a strength: their dreams and ideals were not tied to any power structure; they, therefore, had a sort of flexibility which was not available to - for example - a colonial official. While the travellers certainly went out with the assumptions, even prejudices, regarding what they would find, they also gave themselves time and space to rethink and reconsider." (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 216).

2.3 Nepal Becoming a Major Destination of the Hippie Trail

Nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, Nepal's role in the Hippie Trail was deeply intertwined with its unique historical, political, and geographical context. Historically, Nepal maintained its independence despite its position between British India and China, owing to its rugged mountainous terrain that served as a natural barrier against external invasions. Although Nepal lost territories to the British East India Company in Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816), the British never fully colonised Nepal. The country was ruled by a succession of dynasties, mainly by the Shah and Rana dynasties, each with distinct governing styles. The Shah dynasty held nominal power, while the Ranas, a hereditary aristocracy, wielded *de facto* control over the country for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the political landscape began to shift in the mid-20th century, particularly in the 1950s, when King Tribhuvan led a successful revolution against the Rana oligarchy, initiating Nepal's transition to a constitutional monarchy.

Throughout this period, Western fascination with Nepal's mountains and mystical allure grew, fueled by the tales of the legendary *yeti* (snowman) and the attraction of some of the highest mountains in the world (Liechty 2017). This obsession with the Himalayas reached new heights with the 1953 conquest of Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, further cementing Nepal's

reputation as a destination for intrepid explorers and adventurers. Additionally, Boris Lisanevich, an *émigré* from Odessa, Russian Empire, played a pivotal role in Nepal's modernization efforts, befriending Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and members of the Nepali Shah royal family. Lisanevich's friendship led to the establishment of the first hotel in Nepal, housed within the palace of the ruling Ranas, marking a significant milestone in Nepal's transition to a modern tourist destination in late 1950s (Peters 2021).

By the 1960s, Nepal, and particularly its capital Kathmandu, had captured the imagination of Western counterculture movements. The city's vibrant culture, ancient temples, and laid-back atmosphere became magnets for hippie travellers seeking spiritual enlightenment and cultural immersion. Kathmandu's iconic Freak Street, named for the hippies who frequented it, emerged as a hub for artistic expression, communal living, and cross-cultural exchange. The city's allure was further immortalised in popular culture, with Cat Stevens' song "Katmandu" serving as a musical homage to the city's mystical charm. Nepali culture, with its rich tapestry of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, captivated Western hippies, who embraced Eastern philosophies and practices as alternatives to the materialism and conformity of Western society (Liechty 2017).

3. HIPPIE TRAIL IN NEPAL: THE ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL WITNESSES MEMORIES

3.1 Details of Gathered Interviews

In the following chapter, I will present the analysis of my ethnographic study conducted in Nepal. In it, I will analyse 7 qualitative life-story type interviews conducted with Nepali individuals who encountered Western Hippie Trail travellers in Kathmandu. One interviewee had issues with his hearing ability, so we did an interview while talking half English half Nepali languages. Parts of the interviewee's talk, that I could not understand, were translated by a third Nepali person. All the other interviews were conducted in English.

During my search for interview respondents, I had not set myself the goal of gathering only representatives of a certain profession or caste. My objective was to find Nepali people who had direct contact with the Hippie Trail travellers in Nepal, and who could share their memories from the 1960s and 1970s in English. I was not able to get any women representatives from the older generation. In this case, I will elaborate on the gender issue in the next chapter. Only during the later part of my field work, I noticed that all of my respondents were involved in the arts and/or business. By chance, a large number of my respondents have successful careers and are known nationally or even internationally. This adds a rather unique dimension to my research, since it covers culturally fairly influential individuals. Although it includes a rather narrow sample of the older generation of Nepalis who witnessed the Hippie Trail in the 1960s and 1970s. Further, I will briefly present each person's short life story, which will help to understand the background of the interview participants.

1. Dev Rana. Born in 1952, he was a son of a British Gurkha regiment soldier of Brigade of Gurkhas⁵. Dev spent his childhood and teenage years among hippies from the West learning to play Western music. In 1976, together with his friends, he became a drummer in one of the first Nepali rock bands called "Prism" that played in both Nepal and India. Dev became very popular by singing famous rock song covers in the 1980s and 1990s. He is still an active musician.

2. Trilochan Shrestha. Born in 1945 in Kathmandu. Son of a teacher and owner of an orphanage school where he learned English. Spent his childhood and teenage years among Aghori Babas, a cult of Shaivite ascetics by the Pashupatinath temple and later among hippies from the West. In 1970 Trilochan and his Spanish partner Curry Ojeda opened "Yin Yang" Restaurant in Jhochhen Tole / *the*

⁵ The Brigade of Gurkhas refers to all British Army units composed of Nepalese Gurkha soldiers. These units trace their heritage back to Gurkha forces in the British Indian Army and initially served the East India Company in 1815. The Brigade was reformed several times but is still active until now (Gurkha Welfare Trust 2022).

Freak Street. According to him and some of his peers, Trilochan was the one who gave Jhochhen Tole (the neighbourhood near Kathmandu Durbar square) the famous "Freak Street" name. In 1975, together with his wife, he did the Hippie Trail himself travelling from London to Kathmandu on a double-decker bus. After Nepal banned the use and sale of marijuana, Trilochan started a campaign to revoke the decision, and was arrested sent to prison with other 30 people. Although no drugs were found on him, Trilochan spent seven years in prison. Now is a spiritual teacher on meditation and healthy lifestyle.

3. Suresh Prakash / Jimmy Thapa. Born in 1947 in Lumbini. He was a son of a British Gurkha regiment soldier of Brigade of Gurkhas. At the age of 13 he ran away from home to India and embarked on the first of his many journeys throughout India where he learnt Hindi and English. Suresh came back to Kathmandu in the late 1960s where he witnessed his Western hippie counterculture. In the early 1970s, he legally sold marijuana and hippie style clothes in his newly opened outlet called "Jimmy's Wagon". There he got his nickname Jimmy Thapa. Later he became a nationally famous artist working with miniatures, watercolour and line art. He is still active in creating art as well as doing exhibitions and educating youth in Nepal. Nowadays, he calls himself a spiritual artist.

4. Ram Prasad Manandhar. Born in 1946. He inherited a home near *the Freak Street* where his family used to sell tobacco. In 1965 Ram opened the cake and cafe shop "Snowman" cafe. It became one of the main meeting points for the hippies. The two-storey cafe is one of a few still working businesses in the area. The cafe has been renovated several times, but has kept many details from the past: minimal lighting inside, opportunity for customers to draw and write on the walls, as well as smoke inside. Ram has a hearing problem but still manages to work behind the counter with his son.

5. Mani Lama. Born in 1946 in a Buddhist family but graduated from a Christian school where he learned English and graduated when he was 14. Mani spent his teenage years between Boudhanath and Katmandu centre, befriending Hippie Trail-takers. Later, he found a job in an international project where he had to travel to the mountain regions, collect parasites and make descriptions of different parasite species. With the help of American colleagues from the project, he got a scholarship to study in public Merced College in California where he spent 4 years studying agriculture. After coming back to Kathmandu in the early 1970s, he was not able to find a job related to his degree and eventually started his journey in becoming a famous photographer. One of the most prominent works of Mani is the published photobook "Boudha: Restoring the Great Stupa" (2019) that documents the reconstruction of Boudha after the earthquake, along with commentaries from historians and cultural

experts. For his lifetime work, in 2015 he was awarded the national Award of Excellence. He is still an active photographer.

6. Keshav Sthapit. Born in 1956. From the age of 12 to later teenage years, instead of schooling, he was helping in his family restaurant in the New Road area (close to the *Freak Street*) where he witnessed hippie culture brought by Westerners. There he learnt the English language, fashion and music from hippie clients. In the 1980s he became active in communist movements in Nepal, later becoming a member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). Keshav was elected as the mayor of Kathmandu in 1997. After the royal takeover in 2005, he became a mayor of Kathmandu again, this time appointed by the last king of Nepal Gyanendra. Later in his career, Keshav also became a member of the parliament. Due to several scandals and loss in Kathmandu mayoral election in 2023, he is less active in politics. Currently, he is one of the most prominent activists in the cannabis legalisation campaign in Nepal.

7. Om Bikram Bista. Born in 1955, Kathmandu. He is a son of Nepali writer Daulat Bikram Bista. Growing up around Freak street, he was fascinated by Western music and from the age of 8 to 18 spent time playing as well as singing with foreigners. At the age of 10, he competed in "All Nepal Music Competition". During the 1980s and 1990s Om became a popular singer in both Nepal and India. Nowadays, Om is considered "King of Pop" in Nepal. This was my only interview that I conducted online, because, due to health issues, he is now rehabilitating in the U.S.A.

All life stories were told in a different manner. For example, some respondents start with the history of their ancestors, others with their early childhood; some stories were told in 40 minutes, others in almost 4 hours. Focuses mentioned by my interviewees also have a connection with the facts found in other works or media which I will include in chapter. This analysis serves to highlight individual experiences in collective memory about the Hippie Trail in Nepal. The goal of this chapter is to understand the main aspects of the Hippie Trail in Nepal from the retrospect of its local witnesses. To make almost 4 decades long period of Hippie Trail in Nepal easier to understand and analyse, according to extracted focuses, I decided divide the period into two parts:

1) the early period of the Hippie Trail that existed during the 1950s and 1960s. The era which was marked by the change of royal families in Nepal and countries' opening for foreigners. The respondents were able to share their early life memories of their individual perception during these decades. Here I will focus my analysis on their insights such as: the earliest memories and influences of the hippies in Nepal and personal as well as public relation to hippie counterculture.

2) the fade of the Hippie Trail that existed during the 1970s and early 1980s. Events such as the Iranian Revolution (1978-1979), Soviet invasion to Afghanistan (1979), Iran-Iraq war (1980-

1988) made the idea of an overland journey from the West to Asia hardly possible, so the influx of hippies decreased. The focus will then follow on their memories of the period of the 1970s-1980s as well as defining the end of the Hippie Trail.

3.2 Early period of the Hippie Trail in Nepal

All the interviewees came from diverse but mostly middle or higher class backgrounds, yet none of them mentioned their caste. All respondents learned the English language at an early age. Three of them were educated in foreign Cristian missionary schools, the rest learnt English just by interacting with foreigners. Dev Rana and Suresh Prakash were the children of British Gurkha regiment soldiers. According to Dev, Nepali people with British related-military background had much more exposure to foreign culture than other locals in 1940s and 1950s: *And I heard that especially the soldiers who travelled, who had opportunities to travel more in a way, they also bring Western culture or just other cultures to Nepal just by seeing. Because I think generally it was because my father is complete remote Western village before he became a soldier. So he educated himself in the British Gurkhas and then he learned everything. He put me in a good school. He wanted me to be and make use of my life.*” (Dev Rana). This claim is repeated in research done on Gorkha history of the 20th century (Libois et al. 2020, 3).

All the interviewees spent their childhood or teenage years actively involved in the scene of Western counterculture, residing in and around Basantapur, the old town of Kathmandu with multiple temples and the so-called Freak Street and the nearby area which by hippies was called *Pig Alley*. The other popular hippie gathering places were mainly ancient temples such as Swayambhu, Pashupatinath, Boudhanath and Hanuman Dhoka. Keshav Sthapit had his very first appalling encounter with foreigners when he was 6 years old: *“So firstly, we saw foreigners know we are very shocked. Everybody was shocked then there were like 6 feet tall. We used to say: “white people.”*(Keshav Sthapit). On the other hand, Keshav also emphasised on Kathmandu, being the centre of cultures even before the Hippie Trail: *“We don't belong to, say, one ethnic. We are called Newars. Yeah, it's a conglomeration, you know, from all over. Indians, they came... (people) from China, from Lhasa. Even some Muslim society, they came from Afghanistan. Even from Iraq. Only language was common.”* The unique location of Nepal and its capital made it an important trading centre of the ancient Silk road, more specifically Simraungadh – Kathmandu – Kodari corridor, which dates back to 4th century AD (UNESCO a 2022; UNESCO b 2022). The intense economical and cultural trading made Nepali population more diverse.

Mainly, the earliest remembered experiences with foreign newcomers were described as strange but rather positive. These encounters typically involved dirty but happy and relaxed people who usually smoked cannabis. This foreign appearance sometimes even echoed with the Hindu

ascetic practitioners such as Sadhus and Babas or even beggars: “...and then in Swayambhu bakeries there's all hippie stays. When the hippies came and I was fascinated: “Oh, this is the western babas”. Also with long hair, long beard and they dirty, you know...” (Trilochin Shrestha); “They (hippies) never take a shower... just walk on the street. And they're like beggars. Not all of them but some, they used to beg for hashish.” (Om Bikram Bista). The majority of respondents had knowledge or first-hand experience with cannabis smoking from their cultural background. The importance of the psychoactive cannabis plant in Hindu culture has been recorded for more than 5 thousand years. In the ancient Atharvaveda text, cannabis is mentioned as a source of happiness, a giver of joy, a liberator and one of the five most important plants. Also, the symbolism of hemp is often associated with the community of Shiva worshipers, which is also widespread in Nepal (Cermak 2023; Aravind, 2016; Preiss 2016). Drugs such as cannabis, and eventually psychedelics like LSD and magic mushrooms, were among some of the major focuses in all life stories describing early encounters with hippies. Only Om Bikram Bista described his first experience eating cake infused with hashish with foreigners as a personally unpleasant experience. He suffered a panic attack after smoking and had to be hospitalised. Ram Prasad Manandhar spoke about a few uncomfortable memories, when hippies, under the influence of drugs, used to walk naked around the city, which caused negative reactions from locals. Although such behaviour was rare. Due to cannabis and hashish being legal in Nepal until 1973, four respondents expressed their role in providing information and occasionally the product itself to Western customers and, this way, deepening their connections with Western hippies: “Hippies, they started hanging out in in Boudha and then I also associated with them. I used to also smoke. I used to carry a pipe. It was very legal... I had a pipe and we used to enjoy... It's like a smoking cigarette. And then people used to buy and sell for me because I had many (ties)... I could speak English and I had a lot of foreign friends coming and talking with me so they said: "Mani, I have this. Please try this." They would never pay. I never had to pay so I'd try it. I use to say: "very good" or "not good" (laughing)”. (Mani Lama). “At 14 I was already smoking. Good in smoking chillum, so they are all smoking. So then I smoke chillum. One shot, then the whole room and they'll say: "fuck.... this child like chimney!””(Trilochin Shrestha).

Another two major memories revolved around Westerners introducing their counterculture music and fashion. The first was especially emphasised by Dev Rana and Om Bikram Bista who eventually started their own music career heavily influenced by Western rock brought by Hippies: “I think it's music. What the hippies really brought to the people here was understanding, love and peace through music, through peace, peace and love and maybe style. Fashion as simple as possible...They're very colourful people”. Suresh Prakash and Om Bikram Bista told a story how they, after seeing hippies, fully embraced the Western style: “Because that was hippies, you know, with velvet clothing. So you have to come with fashion also.... And I remember when I had to walk,

there was people there to take pictures on me, you know, like that because I looked like extraordinary. So somehow I got into that.” (Suresh Prakash); *“Oh my gosh, I still remember those beautiful days and I would hear those Beatles songs used to make me so... Even I was not really strong in English that time... What was Beatles singing that I didn't know. But the tune and singing way I used to like very much. That's why I used to go to Freak street. There was so many hippies, especially Europeans and Americans. They got long hair. I have also long hair because of Beatles. And I used to wear those very old western boots, bigger than my feet... I was the only one guy wearing bell bottom that time. And everybody used to laugh.”*(Om Bikram Bista). Music and fashion styles popularised by hippies could be explained through the phenomenon known as the "Pizza Effect"⁶. In this case, in South Asia, such popular instruments as sitar and tabla were used by many hippie counterculture representing Western bands such as the Beatles and Jefferson Airplane. The same bands also became known for using colourful Rajasthani clothing patterns in their style which were re-embraced by the locals (Brodowicz 2024; Tinsley 2019; Oliver 2014, 63).

Although legal and culturally accepted cannabis use in Nepal would attract Westerners, it was mentioned by five respondents only as a minor reason. Good climate, unique nature and rich local culture were described as key motives for Hippie Trail takers to come to Nepal: *"I think the reason is not only smoking, many people say smoking only, right, that is free legal that time, whether everywhere is illegal, that's another point. Another point is over here culture is so rich. You know the temples everywhere. Everybody in your ritual and prayers and meditation and it's connected somehow. The hippies - the freedom. They feel very free here with the nature, with the people, with the culture and loving"* (Trilochin Shrestha). *“Yeah, because the weather is nice...We have a very heavenly, beautiful weather, you know in winter also it's not cold. We don't need a heater. We can sleep with a blanket in summer also you don't need the air condition. In India, you know, they don't have so much respect for them (Westerners) because it was ruled by British the moment when they see white men, they have that British feeling, you know, British have really looted India, they (Indians) still have revenge.”*. (Suresh Prakash).

The main message that respondents got from Western hippies was identified as peace, love, and moving away from traditional values in a non-violent way. Although respondents spent much time with hippie newcomers in Nepal, embracing counterculture style and habits, none of the interviewees defined themselves as hippies. In some cases, they kept their non-hippie identity due to pressure from parents and locals, since “hippie” was often understood as an outsider, not necessarily equal to a local: *"I didn't mind if they called me hippie, Nepali hippie, but it's just that they (hippies)*

⁶ This is a term started to be used in 1970 by an anthropologist Leopold Fischer. It describes cultural elements or practices that originated in one region, were later embraced elsewhere, and then re-imported back into that same country, often with new interpretations or adaptations. It could be also described by term *re-enculturation* (Srinivasan 2017).

were spreading message that is not violent or anything. And you could change the lifestyle, you know it, it doesn't have to be the traditional way of doing things... For me it was odd to say, but my local people used to say "he's a hippie". You know they wouldn't tell me in front of me because they have respect for me." (Mani Lama). "So they call me a hippie. And then I didn't mind that." (Suresh Prakash). "I used to look like hippie... And my mom, my dad was so frustrated with me, they said: "what's wrong with you? Your clothes, your look. What happened?...Hippies only the westerners."" (Om Bikram Bista).

While all interviewees had exposure to English from an early age, their paths diverged in terms of education and interactions with foreigners. The hippie counterculture scene in and around Basantapur, Kathmandu, served as a focal point for cross-cultural exchange, with ancient temple complexes and gathering places like Freak Street as hubs of activity. Early encounters with hippies were marked by curiosity and fascination, as locals observed the free-spirited lifestyle and unconventional behaviour of the newcomers. The importation of Western music, fashion, and drug culture played a significant role in shaping the experiences of the interviewees. Despite the association with hippie culture, none of the interviewees identified as hippies themselves, reflecting the nuanced attitudes towards the counterculture movement among Nepali locals.

3.3 The fade of Hippie Trail in Nepal

All interviewees, when naming the end of the Hippie Trail in Nepal, did not choose specific dates, but rather processes, among which the main three stood out: growth of tourism sector, cannabis criminalisation of cannabis and hippies becoming more mature. First, the popularity of Nepal among tourists in a way overshadowed the influx of hippies. A new tourism sector had already developed and many new places for tourists began to spread in other parts of the capital. "They (foreigners) shifted to the Thamel⁷. It was after 80s. At that time, many tourists used to come, so they needed to better places." (Ram Prasad Manandhar). "Nepal was exposed all over the world... Yeah, 80s and new foreigners came. They were more rich. They wanted to live more comfortable." (Keshav Sthapit) From 1975 until the Nepali Civil War (1996-2006), the Nepali government initiated new policies towards the increase of the tourism sector which made Nepal more popular among the richer segment of Westerners (Bhandari 2022, 34-36).

Another major reason was Nepal's government initiatives to ban cannabis in the country. In 1971 the US President Richard Nixon started the infamous War on Drugs and actively encouraged other countries in the world to adopt the same repressive drug policy stance. In 1973 as the United States pressured the government of Nepal to ban narcotics, the country's first laws restricting the drug

⁷ A commercial area located in Kathmandu. Thamel is a current centre of the tourist industry in Kathmandu that contains modern hotel, shops and restaurants infrastructure.

trade came into force. The hypocrisy of the US drug policy was proven by the makers of this policy themselves, when 8 years ago, a secret quote from John Ehrlichman, Richard Nixon's former domestic affairs adviser, was made public, in which he claimed that the war on drugs was deliberately aimed at discriminated minorities, including hippies abroad (LoBianco 2016). *"The American government gave some money to Nepal government and the government changed the policy and drugs were banned. I do not think the ban is good. Marijuana is medicine. It does not make harm to all people. Heroin make harm."* (Ram Prasad Manandhar); *"Slowly in the 80s after the mid 80s the laws started to change also they become stricter, but then it was because the Americans illegalized it (cannabis)"* (Mani Lama). *"The Vietnam War stopped, and then all the people went to their own home, you know. Everything illegal here, smoking part finished. Strict rules"; "But it was after the ban of marijuana. Hard drugs start to move from there. So the ban on marijuana maybe influenced the hard drugs. Yes, when I come out (from jail in 1983), everybody addicted to heroin and morphine"* (Trilochan Shrestha). When cannabis became illegal, it was placed in the same group of prohibited substances as heroin. With the latter having a much higher market price and taking up less space than cannabis, it has become an increasingly attractive contraband item on the global black market. In the last few decades of the 20th, Nepal, like many other countries in the world, was characterised by the proliferation of various types of opioids and high rates of drug-related morbidity and mortality (Ambekar et al. 2013, Shrestha 1992). All the respondents mentioned that the Nepali government should re-legalize cannabis once again, since it could bring economic potential to the country and its traditional medicinal treatment would be preserved.

Lastly, one respondent mentioned the 1980s as the time when the hippie counterculture generation became older and more serious about their life: *"So they started getting more serious, with life, thinking about life. Family. And people started getting a little scattered, they were more responsible. A lot of responsibilities. So that's when it happened in the early 80s, then, suddenly everything kind of faded away."* (Dev Rana).

The oral histories from the Hippie Trail witnesses in Nepal showed some of the key memories of the Hippie Trail impact on respondents' individual and social dimensions. Concrete memories help us to understand how Nepalis, who interacted with Western hippie counterculture newcomers, felt. While communicating with the locals, I tried to find out how the Hippie Trail was presented in the media during the Trail period. The respondents could not give me any examples of the media that reported on the phenomenon, except for a few that mentioned the *"Hare Ram, Hare Krishna"* which I already described in the first chapter. Although the respondents provided many more individual memories, they were fundamentally less related to the Hippie Trail phenomenon in Nepal than already mentioned in this chapter. All mentioned individual memories from the earliest period of life merged into shared collective memory. This collective memory could be described by

commonly used terminology, similar evaluations of Hippie Trail aspects, shared counterculture rituals (full-moon parties, collective use of psychoactive substances) and commonly identified objects (places, cafes, music bands). This could be also explained by the relatively small social bubble of the Hippie Trail in Kathmandu. Although most of the respondents lived in various parts of the Kathmandu Valley, the main sites of Hippie Trail "action" were relatively small areas around the capital's main temples or main streets. A significant number of respondents, although not close friends with each other, often knew or have heard of each other from the days of the Hippie Trail. It is important to mention that between 1961 and 1981 the population of Kathmandu almost doubled (from 168,000 to 315,000 inhabitants) (Thapa et al. 2008, 48-49). However, in these decades, the population grew due to the rapid birth rate and the urbanisation of the country, with settlers moving from the surrounding villages to the outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley, but not as much as the inhabitants of the surrounding countries (ibid.). Currently, with the population still growing rapidly, cultural centres in the Kathmandu Valley are decentralised and widely scattered from the former epicentre of Jhochhen Tole.

4. HIPPIE TRAIL MEMORY MANIFESTATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY NEPAL

In this chapter, I will present the rest of my ethnographic study conducted in Nepal that includes 4 more life story-type interviews with the younger generation of Nepalis who were influenced by the Hippie Trail. Naturally, some aspects mentioned by the younger Nepalis will be compared to previous older respondents. Moreover, I will present the analysis of visual material related to hippie counterculture that I gathered in Kathmandu and Pokhara. I will present remaining younger respondents in detail in each of the following sections. All the data will serve to evaluate the Hippie Trail memory manifestations in contemporary Nepal.

4.1 Pokhara in hippie counterculture scene

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Hippie Trail and counterculture scene in Nepal began to shift from Kathmandu to Pokhara, marking a significant transition in the country's cultural landscape. Several factors contributed to this shift, including changes in tourism patterns, government policies, and the evolving preferences of travellers. Kathmandu, once the epicentre of the hippie movement in Nepal, became increasingly commercialised and overcrowded, prompting some travellers to seek alternative destinations that offered a more tranquil and authentic experience. Pokhara, with its stunning natural beauty, serene lakes, and laid-back atmosphere, emerged as an appealing alternative for hippies seeking a bohemian lifestyle amidst Nepal's stunning natural landscapes (Pahari 2020). The laws concerning drug bans and illegal tourists became stronger in the late 1970s, thus Pokhara, played a role in attracting hippies, who were drawn to the city's officials relaxed attitude towards foreigners (Liechty 2017, 303). Additionally, the development of trekking routes in the Annapurna region surrounding Pokhara further enhanced its appeal as a destination for hippies seeking to explore the Himalayan wilderness (ibid.).

Further, I will elaborate on Pokhara's emergence as the new epicentre of the Hippie Trail phenomenon in Nepal, using my own observations and collected visuals, as well as an interview with a Pokhara businessman who shared his life story related to the phenomenon. Basudev Tripathi, more commonly known by his nickname Adam, was born in 1968 in Hemja village located 10 kilometres from Pokhara. He grew up in a poor, illiterate family, but his parents used their saved money to send Basudev to school and learn the English language. From the age of 15, he worked in agricultural activities, mainly carrying big bags of crops through rough terrain to the marketplace. A hardworking small boy became an attraction for foreign travellers to take photos with and give him some money: *“15 years old boy, carrying 15 kilo of load, getting 15 rupees from the tourist, these 3 things are the turning point of my life to turn into tourism.”* (Basudev Tripathi). After finishing his Master's in English in late 1990s, Basudev soon became much involved in the tourism sector - one of the main

aspects of Nepal: *“One writer once said: ‘in Nepal there are 3 religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and tourism.’”* (Basudev Tripathi). Currently he owns a hotel and a trekking company near the centre of Pokhara.

While remembering his teenage years, Basudev described the influx of the hippie counterculture in Pokhara during the 70s and 80s (a decade later than in Kathmandu) as one of the crucial aspects of worldwide popularity of Nepal: *“...then we used to call (hippies) ‘fumare’. It’s in Italian. Fumare means smoking. And then they used to go near the jungle where they would lay down without any fear of unsafe or anything. And then in Nepali we call them ‘Bindas’ it means - ‘no problem life’. You know, you worry about nothing and if something happens, you smoke or drink. Enjoy your life. That was hippie tourism. Another point, until that time, you know, marijuana, hashish. You know, everything was open in Nepal, that’s why hippie tourism came. Actually, I would like to say hippie tourism is the tourism that started Nepal’s tourism... Nepal was introduced by hippies. Yes, of course from mountaineers too. That is one side. But another side was Nepal was paradise for hippies. Hippie tourism main component is nature. Yes, they want to have marijuana, but in middle of the jungle. No motors, no bicycle, no industry, only nature. And enjoy your life. That is hippie tourism.”* (Basudev Tripathi). By emphasising drugs and carelessness, Basudev gave a similar description of what he thinks a hippie is, as did the other respondents. Although Basudev used to help hippies with their journeys as a guide, he was never into drugs himself, trying to avoid negative outcomes such as addiction that he saw among his local friends. According to Basudev, although the first bans on drugs were initiated in the early 1970s, it took more than a decade for the Nepali government to implement it in action, especially in more rural cities like Pokhara: *“In countries like Nepal, the rule is made but is not executed. For a long time, so I think Nepal had made that law due to influence or obligations of United Nations certain protocols. But in society, the marijuana hashish was still in use.”* (Basudev Tripathi). Although not identifying with cannabis culture himself, Basudev claimed that cannabis had always been a part of medicinal and religious traditions in Nepal. According to him, current criminalization of cannabis is not a wise choice, since it curbs the potential for economic growth in the hemp sector and does not make a difference for people who use cannabis regularly under any kind of policy: *“Before 90s there were a lot of hippies. Then after Nepal’s rule and regulation hippie tourism was discouraged. Still, hippie culture exists, but in low quantity... When I become an expert of tourism then I am appealing to my government: Let’s welcome all types of tourists. Hippie tourism case, adventure tourism case, pleasure tourism case, educational tourism case, health tourism case, meditation, yoga...”* (Basudev Tripathi).

While exploring Pokhara myself, I noticed that some businesses still appeal to hippie symbolism as an attraction for travellers. Both in the touristic epicentres and outside the city, some businesses use the term *hippie* in their names (for example “Hippie’s Brew and Bar” or “Hippie Hill Pokhara”).

More than that, the cannabis culture seems to be little curbed by the existing criminalisation policies. As an example, I visited a popular restaurant by the Lake Side (the most popular commercial and recreational area in Pokhara among tourists). In the menu, I found an option to order *Bhang Lassi* which is a traditional drink from cannabis, spices and milk (Illustration No. 8). Depending on the strength of a drink a client wants to order, psychotropic effects might last from 6 to 10 hours. The owner of the restaurant said that since the opening of the restaurant 10 years ago, he had not faced any problems with the law enforcement while officially and non-officially selling various cannabis products. However, I do not know any more details about the owner and his ways of maintaining such business.

Pokhara, with its remote, unique nature, offered visitors a different view of Nepal than the Kathmandu Valley. While during the 1970s Hippie Trail representatives left Kathmandu as drug prohibition intensified in the capital, Pokhara became a new remote haven with a rapidly developing tourism sector. Although here the hippie travellers have merged more with general tourists, the use of the term *hippie* in businesses and the relatively unrestrained recreational consumption of cannabis products have survived to this day. Although I have read about or visited a few other significant regions and cities of Nepal, I have not traced any of the Hippie Trail legacy apart from Pokhara and Kathmandu Valley.

4.2 Gender in Hippie Trail

As some of the Hippie Trail researchers state: “Women on the Hippie Trail were, in sense, torn between the old and the new. The 60s counterculture was not necessarily liberatory for them. Feminism did not emerge as a significant political force until the early 1970s.” (Gemie and Ireland 2018, 72). During the 1970s, the feminist movement was gaining momentum in Western societies, advocating for gender equality, reproductive rights, and social justice. Women on the Hippie Trail often challenged traditional gender roles and societal norms, embracing concepts of free love, autonomy, and self-expression (Slattery 2021; Gemie and Ireland 2018, 71-72).

In Nepal, where patriarchal structures were deeply ingrained, women's roles varied depending on cultural and socioeconomic factors. Traditionally, Nepali women were confined to domestic duties and expected to adhere to strict gender roles. However, as Nepal underwent social and political changes in the mid-20th century, women began to assert themselves in new ways (Tamang 2009, 63-66). In 1951, the overthrow of the Rana oligarchy marked a significant milestone in Nepal's transition to a more democratic society, paving the way for greater opportunities for women's education and empowerment. The establishment of the Nepali Women's Association in the 1950s advocated for women's rights and social welfare, laying the groundwork for future feminist movements in the country. Throughout the decades, Nepali women have continued to challenge gender norms and fight

for equality, with notable figures such as Sapana Pradhan Malla, who became Nepal's first female lawyer in 1967, and Bidhya Devi Bhandari, who became Nepal's first female president in 2015. Despite progress, challenges persist, and the struggle for gender equality remains ongoing in Nepal and beyond.

I got an opportunity to carry out an interview with a female Nepali Sareena Rai. She was born in 1973. After being a farmer, her father enrolled in the Gurkha British regiment, where he met his future wife who was a nurse. The family, with an economically challenging background, started to earn more and live in various places from Honk Kong to Brunei and UK. The bigger part of her childhood, Sareena was constantly moving from place to place. Just after finishing her education in the UK, she went back to Nepal. In the early 90s, she became a musician and, eventually, one of the leading punk genre figures in Nepal. She became famous in local counterculture movements while playing in such punk and heavy rock bands as "Skinhead Barbie", "Bruce Lee", "Jutoh" and currently "Rai ko Ris" (eng. *Anger of Rai*). Sareena is also one of the leading figures in record label "Ris Records" as well as Infoshop library which provides Anarco-feminist literature and advocacy for queers and women of colour. She told me her life story, but, being the only female respondent in my research, she gave a different perspective to the Hippie Trail. Sareena said that in Kathmandu of the 80s and 90s, she would still hear a lot about hippies from locals and was very eager to learn more about them: *"We've always been obsessed by hippies because at that time that was part of rock and roll music. That was the only counterculture that we knew about...I would go around and I'd take a cycle and I would just cycle around town. I would go to Basantapur and Freak Street."* (Sareena Rai). For much of the older generation, who had a more conservative mindset and/or never came in contact with hippies, the term *hippie* would be considered as a rather derogatory term. However, this was also a reason why countercultures used to call themselves like that: *"It was a term that was a derogatory term, obviously. My parents were like: "Are you like a hippie? You're not going out like that, are you? Oh, Why are you wearing that? You look like a hippie.""; "I think in contradiction to older generation when the freak was derogatory term and they took it and we will make it cool. Same with punk. You know, it's derogatory."; "Punk comes from "pankawala" - street kid who's a prostitute. And actually it was used for a male prostitute in colonial India. So they employed young guys and they would raped them. The British colonists. So this is where the word punk apparently came."* (Sareena Rai).

In a significant part of the interview Sareena reflected on the patriarchal side of the Hippie Trail, which, according to her, is rarely emphasised, especially when hearing nostalgic stories from male hippies: *"The people (Westerners) that are leading this movement are mainly male. When I even see the people that were travelling at that time who were Nepali, once again male... That's my problem with the whole hippie movement. About that time, even in the West like when they talk about free love and free sex and drugs and communes and stuff... There's a lot of research has come out about how*

it's actually a lot of it was very abusive towards women. Yeah. And it was just a male free for all. And a lot of people were attracted by it because it was a way to get, you know, get to screw as many women as you can, and but in the guise of poetry and art and you know, it's the same in the Beat Generation, you know. Bunch of dudes going travelling and conquering as many women as possible on the road. It's a massive male fantasy." (Sareena Rai).

Sareena's insights offer a rather oriental lens towards the Hippie Trail in Nepal. She expressed critical thoughts on women being exoticized and, therefore, maintaining vulnerability in the still strongly patriarchal counterculture movements that ironically emphasised freedom and equality. The point about gender issues in mid-20th century Western countercultures were echoed in the work "Memoirs of the Beat Generation Women as an Antidote to Nostalgia for the Fifties" (2019), where gender studies researcher Anna Slonina, draws attention to the more critical and often dramatic memoirs of Beatnik women compared to those of men (Slonina 2019, 83-85).

Sareena noted that even today it is easy to spot the Hippie Trail manifestations in Kathmandu. The current diverse music scene and culturally appropriate cannabis consumption in the capital offer at least a partial survival of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture scene. However, this unrestricted social order also has a negative side, as a lack of rigid rules applies differently to foreigners: *"The remnants of that is a lot of exciting stories, a lot of nostalgia and. People come here and relive it... You know you can still wear freaky clothes and all gonna blink an eyelid. You can sit in a bar and watch rock and blues bands. And hang out with really friendly people. Sort of reliving that whole time. I think, you can still find weed pretty easily and smoke up and you have that privilege of being a foreigner, that you won't get in so much trouble because the Nepali are always very relaxed with westerners."*; *"I think those are the reasons that that's that's how I would feel is why Nepal is a kind of safe haven for criminals. Criminals from all over the world come to hide in Nepal because you can just blend in. It's very lacking in law and order in the same way as in other places in the world, especially in the worst. This is a haven for paedophilia. This is a haven for drug smuggling. This is a haven for criminals from India that are running away from crimes. You know, it's easy to blend in here."* (Sareena Rai).

Sareena was also known with some of my previous older generation respondents. According to her, the Trail was never equal because many Westerners (both men and women) have much stronger passports and greater economic power. While only few privileged male Nepalis were and still are capable of travelling to other countries freely. *"We don't have a passport that we can travel the world with, we're prisoners in our own country. Western embassies have too many criteria. It was pretty amazing that people like Mani Lama and Trilochan and these other guys were able to travel Europe. These characters were all from quite privileged backgrounds, and they were male and they managed to get access."* (Sareena Rai).

The Hippie Trail reflected and perpetuated broader gender dynamics prevalent in society, often replicating traditional roles and stereotypes despite countercultural ideals of freedom and liberation (Gemie and Ireland 2018). Compared to all other respondents, Sarreen, although once passionate about hippie counterculture, nowadays is a lot more critical on it. Due to the strong patriarchal system in Nepal, not many women actively participated in Hippie Trail. In the following section I will present one such female Hippie Trail witness that was mentioned by Sareena.

4.2.1. *Hippini women*

Although several of the respondents mentioned interactions with Western women who arrived on the Hippie Trail, no Nepali women were referred to. Yet, in Western literature, the rarely used term *Hippini* describes exceptionally Nepali women who participated in the hippie counterculture scene. The first time the term was mentioned by Prakash A. Raj in 1978, where he described a low-caste young Nepali woman who was observed by a company of Westerners in the tourist area of Pokhara and West Nepal (Liechty 2017, 257). As researcher Mark Liechty, who did multiple ethnographic researches in Nepal in from the 1990s to 2010s notes: "Vidhea Shrestha was the closest thing to a Nepali *hippini* that I met... Shrestha attended one of the top women's English medium boarding schools in Darjeeling, where she studied English literature... After graduation she came to Kathmandu in 1967 to join an older sister. Together they opened the first designer clothing boutique in the city, named Ravel's Hip Pocket, on a street just off of New Road... Vidhea was attracted to the hippie set. Through customers at her shop she got into the Freak Street scene." (Liechty 2017, 261). As Vidhea herself told in Liechty's interview: "*I knew a lot of people there and I was one of the very few Nepali women, that any of them knew. So I was a curiosity for them as well. You know, I spoke better English than most of them for one thing. I smoked dope easily. I was friendly, I was curious, and I was interested.*" (ibid. 261-262).

Due to her social talents and rebellious attractiveness (Illustration No. 9), Vidhea soon became good friends with a German actress, model Petra Vogt and her friend American beatnik poet and photographer Ira Cohen who came to Kathmandu via the Hippie Trail. In the 1990s, Sareena Rai not only became inspired by Vidhea Shrestha but eventually also became a good friend of hers: "*She and her sister were the first women to walk down the Freak Street with their mini skirts. Sometime in the 70's, late 70s probably... She was an amazing woman. I can relate to her a lot because how I feel these days is like I'm replicating her life sometimes because there's very few of us, Nepali women that managed to exist in this kind of circle as women.*" (Sareena Rai).

Expanding her social circle and becoming a semi-professional jazz singer, Vidhea started to organise the first Nepal music festival "Jazzmandu". The festival after Vidhea's death in 2010 is still organised by her son. In 2018, during a "Photo Kathmandu" festival, an old footage of Vidhea and

her female hippie counterculture friends were exhibited publicly in the *Freak Street* (Nepali Times 2018). A story of her life was also included in a separate chapter in a historical book on the most notable Nepali musicians “Nepali Musicmakers: Between the Dales of Darjeeling and the Vales of Kathmandu” by Peter K. Karthak” (2018). The example of Vidhea offers insight into the complex interplay between gender, culture, and globalisation, highlighting both moments of empowerment and marginalisation for Nepali women in transnational cultural exchange. Hopefully, in future research it can still be possible to find more female respondents that could share their perspective on Hippie Trail in Nepal.

4.3 The visual nostalgia for Hippie Trail in Nepal

While travelling through the streets of Nepal cities, I noticed multiple graffiti, street art depicting images of hippies, psychedelic motifs, and slogans associated with the Hippie Trail era (Illustration No. 10, No. 11, No. 12, No. 13, No. 14, No. 15). These visual reminders serve as tangible expressions of collective memory of Hippie Trail and also reflect the concept of prosthetic memory, whereby individuals and communities use external cues, such as art and symbolism, to evoke and preserve memories of the past events and experiences. Hippie counterculture related symbols from peace signs to rock band names apart from street art, are mainly used in local shops, placards and decorations. They become a nostalgic memory commodity directed to attract not only local but international clients. For locals who may not have personally experienced the Hippie Trail era, these visual cues serve as a bridge to the past, connecting them to a cultural heritage that continues to shape Nepal's identity as a destination for spiritual seekers and adventurous travellers. Further I will present a few examples of how Hippie Trail symbolism is used in contemporary Nepal.

4.3.1. “Ramsterdam. Where the Hippies meet”

Ram Ballav Das was born in 1982 in the city called Janakpur on the Eastern side of Nepal by the border with India. Ram's father owned a small crockery shop and his mother sold homegrown tobacco. When Ram was 5 years old, his father died. Then his family was going through a financial crisis and together they moved to their mother's village. Once an unknown man from Kathmandu appeared in the village. He distributed sweets to the children and offered Ram to come to Kathmandu and work in a carpet factory. At the age of 12 Ram fled to Kathmandu and got a job in the factory. After working for several months without receiving any salary, Ram found himself on the street. Here he lived on alms with other homeless children for a while, until he was sheltered at ROKPA Children's Home - an NGO that has been providing shelter for former street kids since the 1980s. Here Ram lived until he became an adult and was able to get an education. He developed a dream of being

financially -independent and from his early 20s he worked in many places. Eventually in the mid-2000s Ram opened his DVD rental shop, later built a house and rented it for travellers.

Ten years ago from now he opened a cafe-bar "Ramsterdam. Where the Hippies meet" (Illustration No. 16) in Boudhanath⁸. A place that resembles his fascination of Western countercultures about which he has read and watched movies since early adulthood. One of the main aspects of hippie counterculture that Ram emphasises and tries to repeat in his life is sustainability: *"You know that thing dragged me into all these questions that people are asking about saving the planet. You know, reusing things. And really I was into it... And part of the best thing about the hippie life is that they don't look for brand new thing. Hippies were the first group who were reusing the things."* (Ram). Nowadays, 95% of the "Ramsterdam" is made up of reused materials. In the chaotically cluttered cafe, you can find everything from hippie posters to stuffed bookshelves, parts of Royal Enfield motorcycles, collection of Western beer bottles, flags of countries given by guests and hats forgotten by them (Illustration No. 17). A term *hippie* in this cafe, according to Ram, expands and contains multiple Western icons from the 20th century. It depicts not only the hippie counterculture but his fascination with Westernization, therefore somehow the portrait of James Dean or screenshot from the movie "Godfather" finds its place on the main wall (Illustration 18). For Ram, the term *hippie* also means a way of happy and free life: *"This is the wrong neighbourhood to have a hippie cafe, right? But actually, all the Buddhists are hippies. You know, in my opinion Buddha himself was hippie, Shiva himself was hippie. Jesus as well. Check out their pictures. You see, they look like hippies. It's just that Buddhist picture was taken when he was meditating. That's the difference. Nobody took the picture when he was walking around finding weed, you know (laughing)."* (Ram).

A few wild cannabis plants grow in the middle of the café (Illustration No. 19). Although smoking cannabis is technically prohibited here, this half-roofed café is filled with its smell, especially in the evenings when the crowds gather, creating a lively yet relaxed atmosphere with live music gigs. In my last months of field work I often went to "Ramsterdam". Here I found some of my interviewees and many other useful contacts and resources on the research topic. The unique atmosphere with multiple objects reminding of Hippie Trail period here often attracts colourful clientele from around the world who would refer to themselves with a full spectre of labels: from simple tourists to locals, hiking guides and climbers, singers, players and painters, anthropologists and filmmakers, yoga teachers and yoga seekers, drinkers and dreamers, weed lovers and cigar smokers, the freaks, the hippies and even the old beatniks.

⁸ Baudhanath is an area in northeastern outskirts of Kathmandu also known as the ancient trade route from Tibet which enters the Kathmandu Valley. The Area is famous for the influx of the Tibetan refugees, more than 50 Buddhist monasteries and is relatively popular among tourists.

The symbols of the Hippie Trail memories that younger generations haven't experienced are still reproduced by them. This symbolism is possible to trace in numerous streets and objects as remarks of hippie counterculture that roamed here half a century ago. Ram Ballav Das as many other owners of cafes, restaurants and shops in Kathmandu Valley uses symbols from Hippie Trail to create an attractive and nostalgic atmosphere that touches the period of early Westernization of Nepal in the second half of 20th century. Interestingly, apart from Hippie Trail simplistic symbolism as memory commodification to attract international customers, in Ram's case it's also bringing a notion of sustainability - an aspect that was not mentioned by any of Hippie Trail witnesses. It serves as an example of how constant development of collective memory is capable of projecting different aspects of historical events. In this case, Ram who has not experienced Hippie Trail himself, is eager to add a spectre of tangible meanings to the term *hippie*.

4.3.2 "Re-legalize Nepal" movement

I have observed a particularly vivid revival of the Hippie Trail symbolism in the last few years in the rapidly growing social movement "Legalize Nepal". With referral to Hippie Trail period and pre-War on Drugs era, when drugs in Nepal were regulated. Thus, the movement is also known by the recently emerged name of "Re-legalize Nepal". Just over two years old, "Re-legalize Nepal" has received a lot of attention not only among Nepali society or politics, but also among the global community of cannabis legalisation enthusiasts (Ojha and Aryal 2023). I had the opportunity to conduct a life story interview with one of the founders and current leader of the movement, Rajiv Kafle. With him, we discussed the symbolic meaning of the Hippie Trail in order to achieve political changes in the country and visited the unofficial headquarters of "Re-legalize Nepal" - a hostel, a restaurant and a place of cultural events, called "Hippie Hill" owned by Rajiv.

Rajiv Kafle was born in 1973, symbolically during the first bans of cannabis trade in Nepal. He grew up in the city of Lalitpur near Kathmandu. As a teenager, spending a lot of time on the streets, he became involved in the culture of illegal drugs. At the age of 19, he became addicted to heroin. At the age of 25, Rajiv contracted HIV through contaminated needles: *"In 1997, HIV was a death sentence. So there was no hope. The doctor I spoke to told me I would probably live another three years. So by the year 2000, I would be gone"* (Rajiv). At the time, Rajiv knew a number of people with a similar fate, including children born with HIV infection: *"So we thought, well, we're going to die because there was no treatment. I said, well, why not die in a quiet place? I started looking for a place like that, until everyone we ended up on "Hippie hill"."* (Rajiv). Today, a former abandoned rehabilitation centre became a hostel, restaurant and event venue full of Hippie Trail symbolism, located on the edge of the Kathmandu Valley (approximately 13 kilometres from the *Freak Street*). In the mid-2000s, Rajiv Kafle became president of National Association of People

Living with HIV and interned with global harm reduction organisations. For several decades Rajiv also was interested in evidence on cannabis helping to combat various symptoms experienced by HIV patients. Rajiv and many of his fellow cannabis users have noted that the plant must become more accessible not only to people with HIV, but also for wider medical and recreational uses in the country: *"After 10 years of working with HIV and harm reduction, I saw that the legalisation of cannabis and the law reform is an area where we may have to do something"; "By bringing farmers together and coordinating regulatory matters, I think we will even surpass other Asian countries."* (Rajiv). Eventually, Rajiv crossed paths with another activist, Heman Shahi, who at that time had already emigrated to the United States. Both had already been known for their advocacy for the legalisation of cannabis, and joined forces in 2021. They founded the social movement "Legalize Nepal". The movement gained notoriety after the Nepali media gave extensive coverage to several rallies organised by Rajiv for the legalisation of cannabis. At one such rally, the movement's participants demanded the release of Rajiv from prison (where he spent several days in 2021) on charges related to the possession, use and distribution of cannabis (The Kathmandu Post 2021; Nepal Live Today 2021). Briefly detained, Rajiv was later released, symbolising the victory of the movement's leaders over the ineffectiveness of the country's repressive drug policy.

Since the creation of the movement, Hippie Hill has also become the unofficial headquarters of the movement, where the leader of the movement often stays. During my ethnographic research, I visited this place, located in the highlands of the Kathmandu Valley, several times. The complex of several buildings is richly decorated with Hippie Trail motifs. (Illustration No. 20, Illustration No. 21).

The Hippie Hill is usually packed and is mostly visited by individual tourists interested in hippie culture and groups of local cannabis culture enthusiasts who usually smoke weed freely here. Around the building, mostly farmers live in shacks, and in the hilly areas free of infrastructure, they grow hemp plants and sell it for 100 Nepali rupees per approximately 6-10 grams packet of cannabis, simply wrapped in used paper (Illustration 22). Such packets could be relatively easily bought not far from the place of "Hippy Hill". The place is at the foot of a particularly steep hill, so it is only possible to reach it with sufficiently powerful motorcycles or ATVs. Here, Rajiv often holds meetings with various journalists, politicians or scientists, discussing important legislation issues and organising lobbying campaigns. Nowadays, the movement is also called "Re-legalize Nepal", referring to the legalisation policies that existed in Nepal up to 1973.

The visuals of the "Legalize Nepal" movement are embodied in the movement brochure (Illustration No.23) which depict multiple aspects of cannabis and its products. The symbolism from the Hippie Trail era.

Apart from the visual symbols of the movement campaign in brochures or their social media, the notion of nostalgia unfolds much more widely in the "Legalize Nepal" headquarters. 1960s and 1970s rock music hits are often played here, the smell of smoked weed can be felt, and the free-flowing mostly young clientele of locals and tourists alike, resemble peaceful counterculture representatives from the 20th century. According to the founders of the "Re-legalize Nepal" movement, the Hippie Trail motifs used in the movement symbolise the highly successful drug regulatory system during the Trail period, to which it is encouraged to return. The symbolism of the Hippie Trail here becomes a nostalgic tool for political ends. As memory studies researcher Svetlana Boym states: "Nostalgia tends to colonise politics and history. Like the conspiratorial imagination, the nostalgic viewpoint does not allow us to see anything beyond nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia is often closely linked to politics." (Boym 2007, 18). Similar to the commodification of symbols of memory in the context of commerce mentioned in the previous section, here the symbolism of the Hippie Trail is selectively chosen, thus simplifying the entire period and extracting its most useful aspects for political purposes.

By comparing the recollections of Hippie Trail witnesses from the third chapter with the perspectives of the younger generation and the symbolism associated with the Trail in contemporary Nepal, a more expansive understanding of the phenomenon becomes apparent. First of all, from a geographical point of view it seems that the Hippie Trail has found its way to another major Nepal city of Pokhara where it can be distinguished as a milder form mixed with other incoming foreigners. In the city the traces of Hippie Trail can be still found in the memory of locals and through the usage of the term *hippie* in local businesses. A briefly touched aspect of gender shows that Nepali women in Hippie Trail were almost completely absent due to the country's strong patriarchal system and sexist tendencies of the period in general. Yet, the example of *hippini* Vidhea Shrestha represents one bright female role model who remains mentioned both by the younger generation and in Hippie Trail exhibitions. It was also possible to record that the already prosthetic memory of the Hippie Trail in Nepal unfolds through simplified symbols. They are mostly used as an attractive expression of westernisation in Nepal and a kind of commodification of memory that becomes part of the advertising of various businesses. In addition, this symbolism, carrying the power of nostalgia, is used for political purposes in order to revive the drug regulation that existed in the days of the Hippie Trail.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, my choice to use the memory studies as a primary theoretical framework worked quite well in identifying a legacy of an abstract period of Hippie Trail. I have noticed that the emphasis on the concepts describing the process of creation of memory quite differs among the scholars of this field. Ongoing memory concepts debates, once adapted to practical examples, reflect through complex and ongoing interplay of individual, collective and eventually cultural as well as prosthetic memories. Currently, it might be the last decade to examine this memory interplay through ethnographic methods until it will become impossible to record the authentic recollections of the Hippie Trail period witnesses.

Historical analysis of Hippie Trail story reveals that it emerged from multiple counterculture movements with a common fascination towards Eastern cultures and religions. Easternised hippie counterculture paradoxically became the main Westernisation carrier in Nepal during the Hippie Trail. In an already isolated country, it created a unique environment where concepts of postcolonial discourse, such as mimicry, ambivalence and gaze must be understood in both ways. On the one hand, from the perspective of the Nepali, who adopted the values, style and symbols of the foreigners, on the other hand, from the representatives of Western countercultures, who looked at Eastern cultures and religions with admiration at least some degree of appropriation. I do not deny that there were stereotypes and simplifications of each other's cultures on both sides. But because of the lasting mostly positive views of each side towards Hippie Trail, I argue that it was at least a step from classical orientalism to affirmative orientalism. The latter term separates the Hippie Trail from earlier, more colonial movements and emphasises the foundations laid by the Trail for modern tourism.

While analysing oral histories of the Nepali Hippie Trail witnesses, I was able to trace commonalities in their individual memories, common terminology, joint activities with Western hippies, adoption of hippie related art and music styles that became products of Nepali collective memory. Needless to say, this memory represents only a minority of men. I managed to only scratch the gender aspect on the Hippie Trail. It became obvious that due to strict patriarchal cultural norms, Nepali women had minimal opportunities to intertwine with the counterculture movement. I traced only one Nepali woman named *hippini*, who became a relatively famous participant of Hippie Trail. The lack of literature on gender issues among locals participating in countercultures not only in Nepal, but also in other countries of the Hippie Trail, shows a great need to analyse this aspect in more detail in future.

The stories of younger respondents who grew up already in the post-Hippie Trail, the significance of the period follows them to this day. Through images, music, and stories, these media symbols representations continue to evoke nostalgia, curiosity, and fascination, contributing to the

enduring legacy of the Hippie Trail in Nepal's cultural identity. I would categorise the reproduction of Hippie Trail symbols into two main currents: commercial and political reproduction of memories. The first current, commercial apart from the street art that occurs in places, is most reflected especially in business names and decorations. These are simplified symbols of the hippie counterculture or commodified memories that encourage to attract the attention of not only local but also international customers.

The second current of reproduction of Hippie Trail symbols, the political one, has intensified in recent years. Proponents of the cannabis legalisation movement in particular use the Hippie Trail narrative and its symbolism in order to seek changes in the country's politics. With the help of simplified symbols of the Hippie Trail, memory narratives of this period change over time according to the need. Ultimately, the transition from collective memory to cultural memory is a dynamic and ongoing process shaped by the interplay of individual recollections and created narratives.

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ANNEX



Illustration No. 1 One of the main Kathmandu streets Jhochhen Tole also called “The Freak Street”. It is possible to see that some of the shops inherited the word “Freak”. From such shops often one can hear background music by the Beatles and similar hippie counterculture related bands. (May 4, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Basantapur, Jhochhen Tole; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 2 Screenshot from the movie "Hare Ram Hare Krishna" (1971), depicting hippie subculture of both Western and Eastern people singing and dancing near the temple of Kathmandu Durbar Square.



Illustration No. 3 Screenshot from the movie “Hare Ram Hare Krishna” (1971), depicting main character dancing with Westerners and singing “Dum Maro Dum”(eng. Puff, take a puff) in the temple of Kathmandu Durbar Square.



Illustration No. 4 Screenshot from the movie “Hare Ram Hare Krishna” (1971), depicting main character sharing a chillum (a traditional tool for smoking hashish) with locals and Westerners in the temple of Kathmandu Durbar Square.



Illustration No. 5 Flower Love by C. Keelanz (1967) in comparison with a painting by A. Mucha (1898). Retrieved from: <https://byronsmuse.wordpress.com/2016/10/06/art-nouveau-and-1960s-a-psychedelic-dream/>.



Illustration No. 6 Unknown 1960s poster in comparison with A. Mucha painting “Job” (1898).

Retrieved from: <https://byronsmuse.wordpress.com/2016/10/06/art-nouveau-and-1960s-a-psychedelic-dream/>.



Illustration No. 7, poster for The Crazy World of Arthur Brown at UFO by M. English & N. Waymouth (1967) in comparison with the cover of Journal “Des Ventes” by G. de Feure (1897).

Retrieved from: <https://byronsmuse.wordpress.com/2016/10/06/art-nouveau-and-1960s-a-psychedelic-dream/>.

| | | DRINKS | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|---|-----------|---------|
| | | | Small Pot | Big Pot |
| Hot Drinks | | Glass | 100 | 180 |
| Black Tea | 40 | | 140 | 260 |
| Black Tea with Masala | 60 |  | 100 | 180 |
| Hot Lemon | 40 | | 110 | 200 |
| Lemon Tea | 45 | | 120 | 220 |
| Mint Tea | 50 | | 120 | 220 |
| Lemon Grass Tea | 50 | | 120 | 320 |
| Lemon Grass with Honey Tea | 75 | | 160 | 300 |
| Milk Tea | 70 | | 160 | 340 |
| Milk Tea with Masala | 80 | | 180 | 340 |
| Tulsi Holy Basil Tea | 60 |  | 140 | 260 |
| Tulsi Holy Basil with Honey | 85 | | 190 | 340 |
| Hot Ginger Lemon | 55 | | 130 | 240 |
| Hot Lemon Ginger with Honey | 80 | | 180 | 340 |
| Ayurvedic Tea for Cold | 100 | | 220 | 420 |
| Coffee | | | | |
| Black Coffee | 70 |  | 160 | 300 |
| Milk Coffee | 100 | | 220 | 420 |
| Hot Chocolate | 100 | | 220 | 420 |
| Cold Drinks | | | | |
| Mineral Water | 40 |  | | |
| Plain Soda | 80 | | | |
| Coke, Fanta, Sprite | 80 | | | |
| Lemon Soda | 100 | | | |
| Ice Tea | 100 | | | |
| Fresh Fruits Juice | | | | |
| Fresh Lemon | 100 |  | | |
| Lemon Mint | 150 | | | |
| Water Melon | 180 | | | |
| Papaya | 180 | | | |
| Mango | 180 | | | |
| Pineapple or Orange | 180 | | | |
| Nepali Beer | | | | |
| Strong | 500 | | | |
| Premium | 550 | | | |
| Lassi | | Small | Big | |
| Fresh Curd | | 80 | 120 | |
| Plain Lassi | | 100 | 150 | |
| Sweet Lassi | | 110 | 160 | |
| Lemon Lassi | | 120 | 180 | |
| Papaya or Banana | | 120 | 180 | |
| Mango | | 140 | 180 | |
| Mixed Fruits | | 150 | 210 | |
| Bhang Lassi | | 150 | 220 | |
| | | 300 | 450 | |
| Fresh Milk Shake | | Small Glass | Big Glass | |
| Banana or Papaya Milk Shake | 100 | 100 | 150 | |
| Mixed Fruit or Mango Milk Shake | 120 | 120 | 180 | |
| Coffee or Chocolate Milk Shake | 130 | 130 | 190 | |

Illustration No. 8 Menu in the restaurant offering cannabis infused, psychoactive traditional drink Bhang Lassi. (April 5, 2023; Nepal, Pokhara, Lake Side, photograph by author).



Illustration No. 9 Vidhea Shrestha on the roof of “Yin Yang” restaurant which belonged to Trilochan Shrestha. Jhochhen Tole, Kathmandu. Author unknown. Derived from: <https://nepalitimes.com/here-now/hippinis>.



Illustration No. 10 Painted walls in front of a former café “Yin Yang” owned by Trilochan Shrestha. According to locals: “It depicts musicians inspired by the Beatles”. (May 6, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Basantapur, Jhochhen Tole; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 11 Painted walls by the former Yin Yang restaurant “Yin Yang” owned by Trilochan Shrestha. (May 6, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Basantapur, Jhochhen Tole; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 12 A collage of abandoned Tribhuvan University bus of painted in hippie counterculture symbols. (May 22, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Central Campus of Tribhuvan University; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 13 Clothing shop with word Freak in its name. (May 22, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Basantapur; photograph by author).



*Illustration No. 14 A night club with hippie counterculture and drugs related words in its name.
(May 22, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Thamel; photograph by author).*



Illustration No. 15 A car décor and parts shop with The Beatles word in its name. (May 22, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Jhamsikhel; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 16 A café-bar placard owned by Ram Ballav Das. (June 1, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Boudhanath; photograph by author)



Illustration No. 17 “Ramsterdam” interior. (May 26, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Boudhanath; photograph by author)



Illustration No. 18 “Ramsterdam” interior. Pictures of James Dean and a scene from movie “Godfather” on the main wall. (May 26, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Boudhanath; photograph by author)



*Illustration No. 19 “Ramsterdam” interior. A cannabis plant growing in the middle of café-bar.
(May 26, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu, Boudhanath; photograph by author)*



Illustration No. 20 A “Hippie Hill” interior with painted map of Hippie Trail and cannabis symbols. (May 17, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 21 A collage of “Hippie Hill” exterior with painted symbols of hippie counterculture. (May 17, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu; photograph by author).

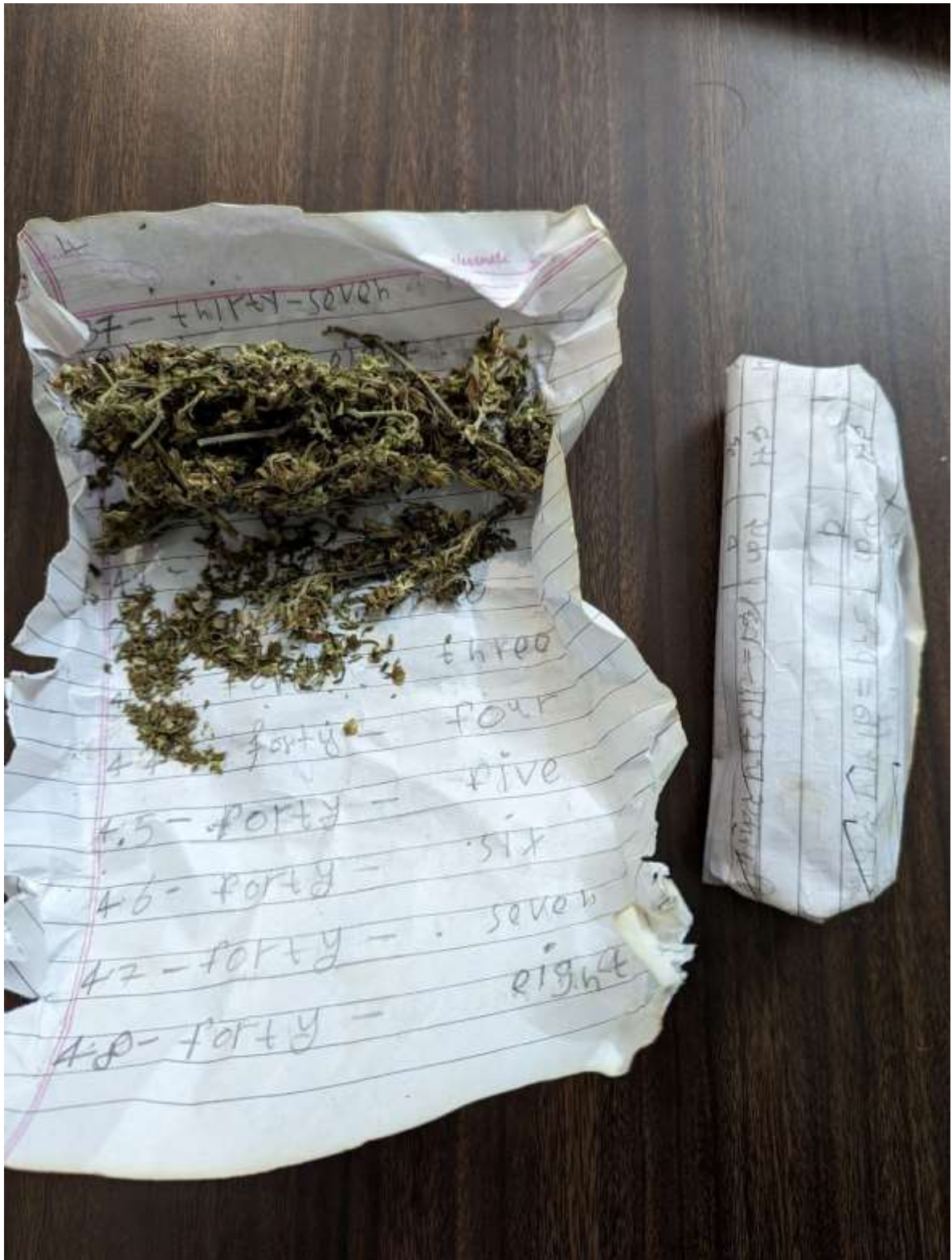


Illustration No. 22. A package with cannabis bought by “Hippie Hill” visitors in the nearby area, inhabited by farmers. The packet costs 100 Nepali rupees and weights approximately 6-10 grams.

Used wrapping paper reminds of a children homework. (May 17, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu; photograph by author).



Illustration No. 23. "Legalize Nepal" movement brochures containing multiple scenes related to cannabis products use. (From the left to right) Hindu ascetics smoking chillum to worship God Shiva; photos of Hippie Trail era shops postcards around the Freak Street commercialising marijuana and hashish products as well as hippies around the Freak Street; religious depiction of sacred cannabis infused drink Bhang. (May 17, 2023; Nepal, Kathmandu; photograph by author).

SANTRAUKA

Šiame darbe yra nagrinėjami Hippije Trail reiškinio atminties procesai Nepale nuo pat reiškinio atsiradimo ties šalies atsivėrimu praeito amžiaus 6-ajame dešimtmetyje iki šių dienų, fokusuojantis į vietos gyventojų perspektyvą. Kompleksiškas Hippije Trail vaizduoja Vakarų kontrakultūrų atstovų migraciją į Azijos šalis, tarp kurių Nepalas tapo viena iš pagrindinių reiškinio vietų. Darbe yra siekiama išanalizuoti, kaip Hippije Trail vystėsi kontrakultūrų pagrindu bei kokį atminimą paliko nepaliečiams. Taip pat yra siekiama ištirti šio reiškinio apraiškas per jo simboliką šiuolaikiniame Nepale. Tyrime yra taikoma tarpdisciplininė, kompleksinė metodologija, apimanti kokybinius metodus, tokius kaip: išsamios gyvenimo istorijos tipo interviu ir (ne-)vaizdinės etnografinės medžiagos analizė. Platus spektras atminties studijų teorijų bei pokolonijinių studijų dimensija, tampa pagrindinėmis tyrimo teorinėmis prieigomis. Darbas atskleidžia sudėtingą hipių kontrakultūros rytietizaciją, kuris paradoksaliai tapo svarbia vesternizacijos apraiška Nepale Hippije Trail metu. Taip pat tyrimas parodo, kad šiuolaikiniame Nepale Hippije Trail simboliai pasireiškia dviem pagrindinėmis srovėmis: komerciniu ir politiniu prisiminimų atkūrimu.

Šis tyrimas gali būti naudingas analizuojant Hippije Trail poveikį Nepalui per atminties studijų ir pokolonijines perspektyvas. Taip pat tiriant vyresniosios ir jaunesniosios kartų atstovų gyvenimo istorijas Nepale. Tyrimas taip pat paliečia Hippije Trail lyčių aspektą, kurį derėtų išplėtoti atliekant tolimesnius tyrinėjimus lyčių studijų srityje.