



PART ONE

FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

1950s - 1960s



When I was twenty years old, my family returned from India, where I was born and lived for most of my life, to England, our homeland. It was during the turbulent sixties, and I was about to be introduced to a movement that didn't even have a name yet. How could I have possibly known then that the strange and mystical religion I had been surrounded by in India would someday be at the heart of a spirituality that would influence millions around the world?

One

Bus Ride to the Future

I will never forget that hot, muggy day in London in the summer of 1966 when I was twenty years old. How *could* I forget? After all, it was the day that changed my life forever.

Perhaps if I had been out in the English countryside or beside the sea, that hot, stifling day would have been bearable—but in the city it was miserable. Oh, to be in a garden with its soothing assortment of colorful flowers, my feet dangling in a cool spring!

Reality was all too blatant. The British capital was steeped and simmering in its own crowded bustle, intense noise, and pandemonium of traffic. By day's end I could hardly bear the sound and sweat of it all as I was jostled along in an overcrowded, red, double-decker bus through rush-hour traffic.

Still, in spite of all the unpleasantness, a breathless anticipation filled my soul. That surging excitement was my only motivation to struggle across blistering-hot London. I knew I was on my way to a marvelous experience.

Eventually the bus rounded Piccadilly Circus and honked

impatiently at the myriads of pedestrians overflowing onto the streets. The sidewalk vendors and little shops were teeming with hundreds of tourists. T-shirts hanging on shop canopies sported the slogan “swinging London,” along with coffee mugs, postcards, and dozens of other souvenir items.

A New Spiritual Gospel

The phrase “swinging London” had recently been splashed across the world’s newsstands by *Time* magazine¹ and had captured an atmosphere that really did permeate the London air. I basked proudly in the energy that surrounded me, enchanted with the good fortune to live and work in this pulsating metropolis.

The bus changed gears noisily and puffed out dirty diesel fumes. We moved slowly down Shaftesbury Avenue, the heart of theater land, in Soho. My pulse pounded harder. The next stop was my destination.

I pushed my way through the crowded bus and jumped off with a spurt of enthusiasm. Renewed vigor had me effortlessly nudging my way through throngs of theater goers who crowded



A double-decker London bus

the sidewalks. At last I arrived! I stood still for what seemed to be an endless moment, absorbing the glowing neon advertisements that assured me I was at the right place. The theater marquee carried but one word. The name of the show was *Hair*.²

Soon I was to experience the musical blockbuster that the whole world was singing about. The people milling around me were quite different in appearance from those on the bus. Denim jeans, casual Indian cotton shirts, and hippie informality identified almost everyone. Hairstyles ranged from long to longer to longest. I grinned to myself, realizing I too looked like the *in* generation. At the same time, it was a relief to know that my parents couldn't see me now. How they would argue that I was not conforming to the "required London theater dress."

I had waited months for tonight. Tickets for *Hair* were nearly impossible to buy. I clutched mine protectively, waiting to squeeze through the door. Scanning the crowd, I searched for the friends I was to meet.

The air buzzed as people hummed various songs from the score that was about to begin. Never before had I gone into a show already so familiar with its lyrics and tunes. For months the airwaves had carried those melodies around the world.

Still, I could not have imagined the impact the show itself was to have on my life and thinking. I would not have guessed how religiously I would follow this new spiritual "gospel." I was about to be "converted" by the message of *Hair*, along with thousands of other people of my generation.

We shuffled inside and located our seats. The theater darkened. The rustle of programs stilled. Chills and goose bumps spread through the audience as the orchestra began to play. There was heavy, loud rock music as magnificent, full voices swelled in harmony. There were colors, lights, and sounds. Everything mingled together to draw me willingly, passionately, into the phenomenon. Never before had I known such intense involvement in a theatrical production.

With exciting extravagance, the show animated and popularized outrageously impudent and risqué ideas. Tricky little songs

whipped us into attitudes of rebellion and promiscuity. We cheered and applauded the demise of family, society, government, and country. We decried the past and its values. We sang about the hopeless state of our planet; we coughed and choked for the pollution and wept over the sadness of war.

HAIR
THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL

BOOK & LYRICS - GERMINE RAGNI, MUSIC - GAIT MACDERMOT,
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER - BERTRAND CASTELL, DIRECTED BY TOM O'HORGAN

SHAFTESBURY THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. Phone: 836 6596/7

HAIR I

"MAGNIFICENT" *The People*
 "A ROCKING, RAVING SEXCESS" *Daily Mail*
 "NEVER MIND THE NUDES . . . IT'S A STORMER" *Sunday Mirror*
 "AN ENCHANTING, PERPETUALLY MOVING EVENING" *The Observer*
 "AN EXPERIENCE OF ENORMOUS EXHILARATION" *The People*
 "A FRENZY OF ZEAL AND TENSION" *Daily Express*
 "NOTHING ELSE REMOTELY LIKE IT HAS YET STRUCK THE WEST END . . . A TRUE THEATRICAL CELEBRATION" *The Times*

SHAFTESBURY THEATRE
 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2
 01-836 6596
 MONDAYS to THURSDAYS at 8.0
 FRIDAYS and SATURDAYS at 5.30 and 8.40

Prices of Admission:

STALLS	£2 00	£1 80	£1 50	£1 00
DRESS CIRCLE	£2 00	£1 80	£1 50	£1 00
UPPER CIRCLE	50p			
BALCONY	30p			

Handbill for the London *Hair* production at Shaftesbury Theatre

Every person in the audience was transformed into a mystical searcher through the song lyrics. Everyone contemplated the plaintive question asked in, "Where Do I Go?" That particular song had us following everything, nothing, and even *myself*. It had us asking the eternal question posed in the lyrics, "And will I ever discover why I live and die?"³

Like many other people my age, I had never considered that topic before, but I was to do so a thousand times in the days and months to come. That evening's performance was to lead me, and countless others, on a spiritual quest.

Having disparaged the past and present and looking grimly into

the emptiness of no solution, *Hair* suddenly gave a glimmer of hope. We whooped ecstatically through the marvelous escape presented in “Hashish.” This gleeful song promoted the *wow* experience one could achieve through no less than twenty-five different highs.

In the years to come, I would get hooked on one particular high and try several others. I would understand all too well the appeal of replacing realism with psychedelia.

A New Way of Thinking

Little did I comprehend at the time that through this musical I was being subtly introduced to a new religious system. One song ridiculed the faith of my youth. It encouraged us not to believe in God per se, but instead, to see that we ourselves were like gods. Joyfully we sang the immortal words of the great poet William Shakespeare, taken from his play *Hamlet*:

What a piece of work man is!
How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty,
In form and moving, how express and admirable,
In action how like an angel,
In apprehension how like a god.⁴

My perception of the world was about to change. From here on I was being introduced to a new alternative to my old way of life—one that in the future was to jealously lead me into an uncompromising spiritual dimension.

“Let the sunshine in,” the cast vocalized.⁵

“Let the sunshine in!” we responded at the tops of our voices. *Oh yes, oh yes! Let the sunshine in!* My heart ached with hope. How I longed to experience this new “opening” and its promised sensation. In any case, it would have been hopeless to struggle against the overpowering emotional, mental, and sensual seduction taking place.

We were enticed to taste the fruits of another consciousness through drugs. In exciting harmony we were invited to *lock the*

doors of our minds and *pull down the blinds* . . . “total self-awareness the intention.”⁶

Those lyrics sent us traveling into our bodies and into inner worlds. We were led through guided imagery, visualization, rhythmic music, and enthusiastic energy—to merge with the universe. Through powerful suggestion, colors meshed and individuals joined together in one cosmic force—a force I eventually learned to call “God.”

Our souls could be released from our bodies through astral projection and joined to this “God.” Coming into his presence, we touched him! “Oh, my God,” I hummed with the cast, “your skin is soft, I love your face.” I wept quietly in ecstasy. In my euphoric state, my mind was lulled and led by the musical through many scenes and ideas. And those that made the deepest impression on me were the ones that led through the paths of India. It wasn’t so much that I could relate to the spiritual alternatives that were proclaimed in song; it was that the land of India was in my heart. I had lived there for much of the past nineteen years. I had been born there and considered it my real home.

Ironically, at this point my familiarity with India began to trouble me a bit. I was mildly disturbed as *Hair* took a new turn. The stage filled with the musical sounds of my youth—sitar twangs and skin drum beats. Vibrant music accompanied worshipers of Krishna (one of the millions of India’s gods) onto the stage. Clashing cymbals, hypnotic rhythm, and melodic chants encouraged us to repeat “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna!” I felt reluctant. Nervously I looked around, but most of the audience joined in. They seemed unaware that they were praying. They didn’t realize they were invoking and praising an Indian deity.

Krishna disciples were not entirely new to any of us. They had been a high-profile curiosity on Oxford Street, London’s shopping center, for months as they moved with vigor among the shop goers and tourists. I see now that the saffron-clad devotees so glamorously portrayed on stage gave the group a respectability that changed its future mission in the West. This would eventually

bring thousands of converts into its ranks.

Even in Bengal, where I had spent most of my growing years, this sect (which was established there in the fifteenth century A.D.) did not display the sort of fanatic trancelike madness that we witnessed on Oxford Street or on the stage of *Hair*. I wondered why Westerners were so enthralled with a religious activity that didn't incite much enthusiasm even among its own people in India?

The show moved along captivatingly. In the same way that the Hare Krishna sect was glorified, suddenly so was Yoga. *Yoga!* Alarm bells rang in my mind. The Yoga I had seen in India was intense, arduous, and serious—a discipline taught by avowed spiritual masters who prepared their disciples for death. So why did *Hair's* hero in the song “Donna” go to India to see the *Yoga light*? Why was it associated with drugs and reincarnation and presented as such a sweet, new spiritual experience?

I was more than a little confused now. In India, I had understood reincarnation as a terrible prison with no escape. Now I heard this young man sing that he was reincarnated and so were we all!

Here he was, recalling all his mystical experiences in India—Yoga, reincarnation, and drugs—and telling us this would help us “evolve,” to develop, to unfold and open.

I wanted desperately to belong to this energy—even if it meant giving up the old and embracing the new (although I didn't really understand it), even if it meant turning to concepts I thought were strange and weird and perhaps even wrong. The result would be worth it!

Besides, I told myself, maybe the concepts aren't wrong; maybe they are just different. Maybe my protected upbringing in boarding school and my sheltered life in India were too narrow. I wondered why I had somehow missed seeing all these important mystical aspects of India. Why could I only remember the tragedy, the poverty, the disease, the cruelty, and the apathy? Surely all these people here tonight couldn't be wrong. I wrestled with my heart and soul to uncritically accept all I was hearing, seeing, and feeling. I longed to capture this excitement for myself.

The performers were charged with enthusiasm. They jumped off the stage and mingled with the audience—for me, a theatrical first. It was overwhelming to have them touch us, singing and dancing around us. Now they encouraged us to join in the anthem “Aquarius.”

That familiar song brought me back to the performance with a jolt—

When the moon is in the Seventh House,
 And Jupiter aligns with Mars
 Then peace will guide the planets,
 And love will steer the stars.
 This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius! . . .

Harmony and understanding,
 Sympathy and trust abounding
 No more falsehoods or derisions
 Golden living dreams of visions,
 Mystic crystal revelation,
 And the mind’s true liberation
 Aquarius! Aquarius⁷

The show was over. Soon the theater stage was dark. But my spiritual journey in search of light was just beginning.

For some time to come, the strains of “Aquarius” grew louder and more distinct among young people throughout Western culture. That song summed up the newly-born hopes of a generation: its lyrics clearly stated the hope and vision of the New Age.

Today, like never before, our planet is filled with desperate people, facing the problem of an ever-deteriorating world. On one hand, man is disillusioned with himself, but on the other, he is ever searching for answers in technology and other expressions of *human potential*. He dreams that a more fully evolved, enlightened human specimen will establish a utopian world, one with a perfect political and social system, without disease, poverty, or suffering.

Years ago, *Hair* prophesied that this Utopia would comthrough occult, mystical realms. Our direction would come



Hair cast photo singing *I Got Life* on Broadway—1970

through dreams and visions, through mystic revelation, and through the stars (astrology).

A far more developed belief system, a far more aggressive group of leaders, and a far more determined mass of followers has become what is known as the New Age movement. *Hair*'s visionaries couldn't have hoped for more.

Now I look back and realize the devastating impact that *Hair*'s message had on my thinking, religious outlook, attitudes, and morality. *Hair* not only led me, and millions like me worldwide, into a new mode of rationalizing, it conditioned and honed us for things to come. *Hair* represented the foundational ideas that prepared us and our world for the principles that underlie today's most influential mindset—New Age thinking.

The Age of Aquarius and a Promise of Peace

Millions of people who are being influenced by the New Age do not realize they are being conditioned by a powerful religious and political structure: globalism is the goal, and peace is the promise.

I remember endless conversations with peers in the '60s who

were predominantly focused on hopeless gloom. With unrelenting paranoia, we discussed the inadequacies of society. “Everything,” we agreed, “is corrupt.” This included medicine, food, environment, politics, and education.

A cultivated atmosphere of fear and doom forced us to escape into our own man-made solutions, since answers could only come from us, the awareness brigade, and our enlightened alternatives. Like millions of others, we concluded that a new world order was our only salvation. Our spiritual resources, if encouraged and tapped correctly, could bring goodness, harmony and peace to the world.

The results of nearly fifty years of New Age infiltration into the Western world are staggering. In 1980, Marilyn Ferguson, a major New Age prophetess, wrote a veritable manifesto of New Age philosophy titled *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. Explaining the choice of title for her best seller, she says this:

Conspire, in its literal sense, means “to breathe together.” It is an intimate joining. To make clear the benevolent nature of this joining, I chose the word Aquarian . . . after a dark, violent age, the Piscean, we are entering a millennium of love and light—in the words of the popular song, “The Age of Aquarius,” the time of “the mind’s true liberation.”⁸

Although countless arguments will continue to debate the insinuation of New Age thinking into our culture, the consensus is that a widespread shift in consciousness is taking place. And this is displaying itself in our everyday lives, right under our noses!

New Age proponent David Spangler describes this hope of a New Age world:

The earth [is] entering a new cycle of evolution, which [will be] marked by the appearance of a new consciousness within humanity that would give birth to a new civilization . . . They would then enter a new

age of abundance and spiritual enlightenment—the Age of Aquarius.⁹

This “spiritual enlightenment” can be capsulated in these characteristic points of the New Age:

1. God is seen more as a flowing energy or creative force that exists in all things rather than as a personal God who is distinct from man and creation.
2. Man is seen as divine, essentially a part of God.
3. *Salvation for the soul* is something attained when one becomes an awakened soul by understanding one’s divinity and oneness with all. This *awakening* comes about through the use of various rituals and mystical practices that help remove one’s attachment to the world.
4. The gap between good and evil is eradicated. In other words, there is no evil—all is divine.

The New Age offers new ideas of peace, love, integrity, and community—all that a needy world is hungry for. It attempts to reform religious ideals based on Judeo-Christian principles with an improved formula of application. It seeks to replace age-old sentiments of patriotism and traditional moral standards with a new philosophy. All of the old-fashioned ideals are dismissed as mundane and archaic.

It also casts the more serious charge that the “old ways” only serve to impede the progress of a society bent on an upward evolution to a higher consciousness—the new power.

The conditioning of a potential New Age disciple may start subconsciously at an early age. Perhaps he is trying to find answers and purposes for his life. A difficult family environment may urge him on. Disillusionments and disappointments may create needs. Dissatisfaction with religious hypocrisy may cause him to explore other philosophies. In my case, all of these contributed to my sense of powerlessness and resultant quest.

I became deeply committed to the New Age agenda, although

I must admit I did not understand the spiritual implications. I merely longed for self-improvement and hungered after some kind of peace and love. In more troubled moments, I sensed a strange recognition of New Age teachings and sometimes felt a disturbing tension to realize that some wonderful new idea of mine had originally been written thousands of years before—in Hindu teachings.

My life experiences had taught me more about India and its religious ramifications than any of my enlightened friends would have dared guess. And in my recollection, nothing to be found along the streets of Calcutta, Bombay, or Madras promised a better life to anyone.

So, in accepting New Age teachings in the 1960s, had I somehow accepted the very religion that had frightened me so much as a child? If so, had I somehow misunderstood the sights and sounds and smells of my childhood?

What were those years in India really like?



Endnotes

1/Bus Ride to the Future

1. "You Can Walk Across it on the Grass" (*Time* magazine, April 15, 1966, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,835349,00.html>, accessed 05/2008), cover story.
2. A musical, written by James Rado, Galt Macdermot, and Gerome Ragni, first opening at opening in New York at the Biltmore Theatre on West 47th Street in 1968.
3. "Where Do I Go?," song in the production, *Hair*. All Rights Reserved. Used with permission of ALFRED PUBLISHING CO., INC. (see Lyric Credits, p. 232).
4. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Courier Dover Publications, 1992 edition written around 1600), p. 42.
5. "Let the Sunshine In," song in the production, *Hair*.
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7. "Aquarius," song in the production, *Hair*. All Rights Reserved . Used with permission of ALFRED PUBLISHING CO., INC. (see Lyric Credits, p. 232).
8. Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980), p. 19.
9. David Spangler, *Emergence* (Delta 1984), p. 17.
10. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing, 2006), pp. 175, 164.
11. Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God*, Book 1 (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, First Hardcover edition, 1996), p. 61.

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