

**HIPPIES, THE FLOWER CHILDREN: A SERENADE TO LOVE,
PEACE AND FREEDOM**

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ABSTRACT

In a political and social predicament such as this, the flower children or the “Hippies” as they were popularly called, were born in the 1960s. The Hippie subculture was a counter-reaction to the fiscally oriented lifestyle of the United States, which had developed as a result of the perpetual sponsoring of the ideology of the “American Dream,” which was considered to be the national ethos of the United States, where apparently every individual would be provided with equal opportunities to attain individual success. However, America faltered in its understanding of “everyone”, ignoring the plight of the Hispanic tribes, performing systematic cleansing of indigenous American tribes, following a policy of racial discrimination, and ignoring a history of colonization and oppression that was part of the country’s legacy.

Where have all the flowers gone?

Long time passing

~ [*“Where have all the flowers gone?” by the Kingston Trio*]

In a country that had been consumed by capitalistic tendencies to the brim, and where the towering edifices of falsity looked down on the single glimpse of wood and green which lay there like things left unsaid, there emerged a group which chose to hug the wood and the green and to speak to all of it which lay so silent (with noise) within them. When asked to draw a scene of a perfect city in class, one child with wonder filled in her eyes and crayons in her pockets doodled the green and the tree, but the towering buildings in the pages of his classmates glared at her, and the crayons in her pocket melted like the snow in a distant land that they knew nothing of. The spirits smiled: “A flower child,” they exclaimed, and since then the flowers bloomed differently, like perhaps, just maybe, they were not figments of imaginings but as real as the church walls that melted amidst the passion of the lovers who wore petals of the same hue in their hair. It was winter though; the girl skipped along the cobblestones, a flower child she was. The sun smirked and wondered why the walls melted in his absence, as the petals in the hair of the lovers fell to the ground, wiped away by the wind instantaneously like it was a secret that a God who whispered it couldn’t know of. As if flowers could be so easily forgotten. The flowers weren’t there anymore, the church walls solidified again, moss concealed the cracks, as if flowers could be so easily forgotten.

In a political and social predicament such as this, the flower children or the “Hippies” as they were popularly called, were born in the 1960s. The Hippie subculture was a counter-reaction to the fiscally oriented lifestyle of the United States, which had developed as a result of the perpetual sponsoring of the ideology of the “American Dream,” which was considered to be the national ethos of the United States, where apparently every individual would be provided with equal opportunities to attain individual success. However, America faltered in its understanding of “everyone”, ignoring the plight of the Hispanic tribes, performing systematic cleansing of indigenous American tribes, following a policy of racial discrimination, and ignoring a history of colonization and oppression that was part of the country’s legacy. This

led to a scramble for monetary and material success. Groups of largely white, middle-class teenagers emerged in college campuses who belonged to what in popular culture are known as the baby-boomer or boomer generation. Hippies (also called bohemians, although they are different concepts when studied meticulously) felt alienated from this society and led unconventional lives, refusing quintessential societal norms, propagating communal and organic living. Hippies were also known for their unique style, choosing long hair and casual, often unusual, dress, sometimes in “psychedelic” colors. They were activists for love, peace, and freedom with heightened attention paid to individuality, creativity, and patronship of the arts. They lived their life with such ideals in mind, prospecting the attainment of the spiritual (for which they turned to India, Nepal, and other eastern countries and oriental traditions) and seeking the meaning of life (also acknowledging that society knew nothing of how life was to be led). Hippies advocated nonviolence and love, an infamous phrase being “Make love, not war,” for which they were sometimes called “flower children.” They promoted openness and tolerance as opposed to the restrictions and regimentation they saw in middle-class society. Hippies often practiced open sexual relationships and lived in various types of family groups. Hippies also advocated the recreational use of marijuana and LSD for which they became notoriously known (for instance, the Love Pageant Rally when LSD was banned in California, and Hippies, including the band Grateful Dead, protested, saying that LSD was a tool for spirituality and creative expression). Their justification for this rampant usage of substances was that it was just another way to expand their consciousness.

There were moments in the history of the Hippie Movement that still remain as luminous reminders of the ideals it stood for. As is commonly known, the Hippie Movement started with the Beat Generation, which was a literary subcultural collective initiated by a group of writers whose work explored and influenced American literature and politics in the post-war era. Some of these writers were linked to the San Francisco Renaissance, which led to the popularization of American avant-garde poetry in the 1950s. They too stood for the rejection of traditional American values that were so vividly prevalent in the structure of American society.

However, there was a sharp aesthetic disparity between the two groups. While the Beats wore more somber clothing marked by darker coats, shades, and goatees, the Hippies wore more colorful, psychedelic attire and often let their hair loose. The Beats were known for being “cool cats,” whereas the Hippies were known for being unflinching about their identity, which led to a general impression of most of their activities being ‘nefarious.’

There have been associations in academia that have found a connection between the Hippie Movement and the spiritual philosophy of the Hippies and the Mazdakist movement, which was an Iranian movement and also considered one of the most memorable precedents of post-modern communism. It taught that there were two principles, light and dark (good and evil), that merged at a primordial time, creating the universe. The Mazdakites worshipped the God of Light. They promoted simplistic and pacifistic living. Acts such as murder and killing animals for food or sport were refrained from, as was the consumption of meat. All followers were to treat everyone kindly, including their enemies. Polygamy was also encouraged.

Therefore, another question arises: Did the Hippie movement come from isolation, or was it the product of some historical happening, in addition to the predicament that America was faced with, flowers in one's hair, and a little bit of daydreaming?

One moment that stands out from the history of the Flower Children is People's Park. In 1969, people in Berkeley, California worked together to create this park on land that the University of California, Berkeley had wanted to use for playing fields and a parking lot. After a long delay, during which the site became a dangerous eyesore, thousands of people from all over Berkeley came together to plant flowers and grass there. This occupation led to the famous "flower power" protests of May 15, 1969. Governor Ronald Reagan ordered the National Guard to take over the city of Berkeley, and the protesters responded by planting flowers in every empty lot they could find. Flower power came into its own during this occupation as hippies engaged in acts of civil disobedience to plant flowers in empty lots all over Berkeley under the slogan "Let A Thousand Parks Bloom." Additionally, the Summer of Love inspired collective admiration for artists such as Janis Joplin, Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, The Who, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and many more. Interestingly enough, it also inspired the lyrics: "If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to wear some flowers in your hair."

Of course, there were defects in the movement that were brought to the limelight. The first being that they were very idealistic, and the second being that they aimed to create a difference in society, but in many instances, they also chose to isolate themselves from society. They chose to be part of eastern and oriental society, which was very different from the one they wanted to bring about a change in. Therefore, the question arises of whether they could work

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for a society that they were inherently not part of. While they were passionate about topics like activism, which obviously involved action, they were more concerned with spiritual and artistic pursuits. Renouncing privilege and society to establish a symbiotic relationship with self and nature is not a privilege that is available to those who have to look after their family and keep a footing in the corporate world. Therefore, the fact that Hippies were mostly middle-class white teenagers is obvious, for not many have such immense privilege. As a result, it couldn't be as inclusive as they wanted it to be.

Even after all of its faults, I believe it's okay, if not wonderful to be a Hippie, to have a symbiotic relationship with nature, to walk bare feet and dance with the energy of the wind, because for the poets, it is always about love, and the flowers cannot be easily forgotten.

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