

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ram Dass and Me

Allon Schoener · Wednesday, January 1st, 2020

Ram Dass

1931-2019


Ram Dass was a New Age guru who, in the late 1960s. with Timothy Leary, emerged as a proponent of the psychedelic experience. He died at his home in Maui, Hawaii, on December 22.

For more than fifty years, he was an active presence in my life as well as the life of my wife Mary.

From that Saturday afternoon in 1970 when our Lama Cookbook was deposited outside the door of our apartment at 114 East 90th street, New York, Ram Dass has been a contributing presence in my life and will continue to be. He, too, was a contributor to my wife Mary's life until her death four years ago. Actually, we did not get a cookbook, but an early version of BE HERE NOW called FROM BINDU TO OJAS. It was a 100-page loose leaf compilation of observations, facts, aphorisms, guru sayings and miscellany printed on brown wrapping paper and bound with brown string. In addition, there were pamphlets, pinup photos of gurus and a record.

How did we happen to get it? Mary and I were in our early forties; however, we identified with the rebellious spirit of twenty year olds dominating the late 60s — eventually becoming to quote our son, "Late blooming Hippies." I had worn a suit, with shirt and tie to work. Mary wore dresses with heels and white gloves making her indistinguishable from the Upper East Side matrons who inhabited our neighborhood. There were clusters of Hippies germinating on The Lower East Side. I would hang out hoping to imbibe rebellious spirit.

Somewhere, I picked up a card that said. "Get your LAMA Cookbook. Send a dollar to an address in Taos, New Mexico." I did. We never got a real cookbook, but a book that transformed our lives!

 We sat on the floor imbibing the contents of our "cookbook." We hung the guru photos on the walls, we listened to the record and read the pages aloud to each other. From that moment, our lives entered a different trajectory — living a life based on freedom rather than propriety! We had been liberated from bourgeois conventionality. Wore jeans and sneakers. Became vegetarians. Smoked marijuana. We sought refuge from East 90th Street in Hippie communes, searching for one to join. We preferred our own pursuit and bought a house in Vermont where we could totally reinvent our family life and lived there for twenty seven years.

Ram Dass had liberated us. Thank you Ram Dass!

I have been subscribing to his latest publications and lectures. Yesterday afternoon I decided to listen to “Aging Awakening.” I must have gotten a message that he was passing and that I should connect and demonstrate tribute. I did.

(Image of Ram Dass by [Barabeke](#))

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