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A Compassionate Option for a More Meaningful Life

The Meaning and Power of Modern Ethical Vegetarianism

“YOUR BODY IS NOT A GRAVEYARD.” Robert Adams

The Robert Adams Institute holds National Holiday Vegetarian Feasts and Concerts as Posted

The power and effect of personal choice is emphasized as paramount in the life and Teaching of “The Father of Awareness”, Robert Adams, and his students education by his vegetarian family, whom together personally educated thousands on the spiritual and physical effects of ingesting unnecessary flesh products in our systems, refraining primarily for ‘ethical’ reasons. Together they educated communities internationally through books, classes, literature and the famed home feasts over which Mr. Adams glowingly presided. There, in unbridled goodwill, compassion came alive.

Of course, now ‘ethical vegetarianism’ is a familiar term headlining pop culture in everything from the efforts of PETA and animal protection groups, to celebrity vegan efforts to educate the public on the controversial health effects of digesting flesh products. However, throughout this gentle Ahimsa proponents Teaching, many continuously attempted to debate his uncompromised tender, Franciscan- styled commitment to the non- harm of animals-a commitment taught as reflecting ones own evolvment in selflessness. “*To begin with, you must practice this simple compassion.*”

As I attended their early renowned large, elaborately festive, gourmet vegetarian Sunday feasts hosted freely for everyone from celebrities, friends and famous spiritual authors to orphaned children, there manifested the ancient tradition of generosity expressed in the adage ‘treat the guest as God’. Avid carnivores were introduced to the undreamed of creativity (and delicious options!) in everything from Mrs. Adams mango banana cloud like pancakes to traditional temple green curries served in coconut shells. A divinely nurturing mother to many, a certified nutritionist and gifted gourmet, her skills later took on a different light, in a destined sacred offering in service for solely preparing carefully and devotedly prepared dietary meals in complete nutritional balance three to six times a day for her husband as his body manifested health needs. This enabled him to continue his requested speaking schedule to public audiences in his few emergences from his private residence. He allowed no one else to prepare his food, and his favored most requested recipes are graciously shared in the introduction to ethical compassionate vegetarianism.

Perhaps it was this uncompromising foundation of this gentle modern day saint, that 'explained' his entire Teaching and Being, both as a teacher-and individual affable presence- for his unwavering commitment and emphasis on taking personal responsibility for the suffering of other beings surprised many people deeply entrenched in a comfort zone of mistakenly being 'unattached' to anything that is not convenient or comfortable, (i.e. otherwise known as committing to values). Simple yet soul awakening in his precise answers to why one should not eat living animals, he often just responded, "*Your body is not a graveyard.*"

This of course took many experienced 'debaters' off guard-indeed our body is *not* a graveyard-as there really is no proven nutritional need to eat any animal products at all, and much of this planets cultures never do. There is no debating that. But it quickly became evident in his strong, powerful presence that exhibited such boyish gentility in jaw dropping wisdom that it was a sheer kindness, a non-separation on a conscious level from the pain of others, especially the innocent and defenseless, that was his entire foundation. His entire point of origin.

From the deeply bonded, unusually perceptive family cats and dogs that sat at his feet and at the concerts at the park that he attended on Sunday afternoons, to the troubled and abused creatures that melted at his touch, instantly dissolving all aggression into a seeming spiritual sedation, in which there was no division. The Presence of all of life remained one flowing stream of compassion. And we ourselves were meant for no less. One afternoon he said, "Do not worry about 'awakening', worry about becoming a vehicle of compassion. That is the nature of Awakening."

The dividing point was that his connection with all of life was on peaceful, albeit beautiful terms. Many were still struggling with 'becoming' and 'debating', two very different things that Robert points out separates ego from True Heart. After all, actually committing to refraining from animal flesh is a definitive commitment in our culture, one that requires quiet dignity, faith and respect for others. Dignified, refined, always pronouncedly considerate and well mannered, he answered all requests with grace and gentle suggestions for each person. However, when it came to this subject of why vegetarianism is so unalterably uncompromisable, his answers were succinct and ever the same. "*Your body is not a graveyard.*"

(*For additional extracts on vegetarianism given by Robert Adams see previous issues.)

Now that we knew the unalterable fact, basically that dead animals did not belong in our systems, his extended "Lessons on Vegetarianism" throughout his Discourses were more interesting on many levels rarely touched upon, from the most esoteric to the most practical. I looked at my fourteen-year-old cat that had participated in various deep inward practices devotions with me since high school. I looked at Robert speak of the sanctity and compassion of "the animal kingdom". I looked back at the two loving eyes. He had my attention.

"Robert, why does it matter if you eat meat or not if this world is not a part of us?"

“Did you give life to the animal? You have no right to take it.” And “ You do not require flesh to live. To survive. To be healthy. To be happy.”

“If you really realized that the world is not a part of you, you would not say it. You would simply be a vehicle of compassion for every living thing.”

Then the (sorry, I can't resist) 'meat' of the matter would begin. “ Your body absorbs the terror, the pain, the violence that the animal experiences at the moment of being killed. This becomes a part of your system. All harm to others is harm to ourselves.” This was a surprise to many to hear. Really. Aren't we just talking about a burger here...?

“ You must have a complete compassion for the animal kingdom. A respect. You are not 'better' than them. There is no right to harm any living thing.”

“Robert, there are pacifist monks, Buddhist monks, that eat meat.”

“Are you a Buddhist monk?” “No.” “They have vowed to own nothing, to be beggars to a degree. To take whatever is offered to them by others to survive. Still, there are many who do not eat meat at all.” Robert described his friend, a Tibetan monk who would not eat meat. “Robert, does it create bad karma to eat meat?” Robert looked at him gently. “Would you eat your dog? There is no difference.” The stunned audience looked at him in silence. “But my family eats....” “Do not worry about other people. Do not judge them or bother them. *Just worry about yourself.* You have been preordained to be here and to hear this. Leave other people alone. Be peaceful.”

And so the journey of exploring vegetarianism was born for many. My professional life as well as my personal life was affected to an extraordinary degree, as it triggered new perceptions. To those jet setters and gourmet aficionados that had nightmares of dry tofu and crunchy whole grain birthday cakes, life was about to get a lot more enjoyable. Robert allowed no one to prepare his meals for forty-three years but his wife, and her training lessons in 'ethical vegetarianism' held none of the above and quite a bit of educational gourmet surprises.

If we are going to embrace a life of compassion towards all living beings, then the flow of expanded awareness and sensitivity, “our natural state' would soon lift us to a higher level. In the meantime, there would be meals to be eaten 'to survive'. A lot of meals. Temple like festivities and celebrations which Robert so loved, as in all great cultures, religions and pure companionship throughout history, always centered on the way of the ethnicities of various cultures of feasting and 'breaking bread' in brotherhood with others. Robert Adams shocked many who knew of his extreme self disciplined lifestyle, since his relaxed, easygoing style was taken for granted, mistaken, as far less puritan than his life actually was. Along with refraining from commercial exploitive and desensitizing commonalities, choosing traditional values, Robert had raised his household as lifelong vegetarians, whom dedicated themselves to education on non-harm.

As one of the sole guests daily within his lovely compound, his home sheltered many orphaned and disengaged, embraced in unconditional kindly guidance and spiritual study. The training for vegetarianism was surprisingly lovely. The curries were far richer and full than the norm, the cakes moist and reaming with fruit, the macrobiotic non bland and soothing. Everything tasted special, and the floodgates of love that poured from each

preparation, in the cleanest of 'sattvic' traditions with no pre tasting or touching of food with the hands as taught in temples and holy places.

And the journey to 'better human hood before even beginning to progress' continued. The health issues were rarely brought up, instead was the topic of spiritual maturity in rising above sensory bondage by making choices consciously. In exploration however, the additional aspect of toxins and chemicals in the animals is far greater than the average person is aware, regularly tied to illness and disease in various research publications. Although the required pyramid 'food group' of the past in which meat and dairy was 'required' for health and nutrition, taught enthusiastically in schools, has been revised, listing these foods as optional or in minimal servings, the myth persists that meat is a 'requirement'.

Our culture abounds in exposure to this now familiar embracing of ahimsa. At least towards animals. The recent public clash of celebrities Pamela Anderson and Jessica Simpson, over Simpsons tee shirt that stated something to the effect of 'real girls eat meat', to which Anderson responded with foul name calling, was found worthy of news coverage. It was only a short time ago that the public had never been exposed to such issues. "The primal must be overcome. Do not fool yourself. Work on yourself."

But taking the issue to the next level of maintaining non-harm nor ego based 'superiority' over others while integrating a non-harm lifestyle, is considered a requirement rather than an option in the Teaching of Robert Adams.

Most people are shocked to see that the diets of their favorite restaurants allow their diet to go basically uninhibited. Italian restaurants offer a plethora of dishes, pastas, pizzas and paninis can all be ordered vegetarian. Oriental is effortless, Thai inviting, (Roberts favorite nearby weekly family restaurant was Thai, followed by his preference of Macrobiotic). Mexican is primarily vegetarian in tostadas, enchiladas, and corn based fare. Breakfasts and brunches are easily vegetarian, as were and are his dear buoyant Mrs. Adams famed brunches served to his 'inner circle' since the beginning of his talks.

But when one goes beyond the successful establishment of a palatable and steady, strictly vegetarian diet, one begins to inhale the fresh new air of a new way of life. Driving across the country mid year, for the first time I noticed the hundreds of cows in roadside pastures and farms that define our country, all tagged for butchering.

Considered sacred in India, it was as if I considered them for the first time. I pulled off to the side of the road and walked up to the fence behind which stood a soulful eyed gentle blond cow who stared directly into my heart. I was taken aback, gasping in sudden realization. How could I have never seen it before? Where had I been? Is this what awakening to each new layer of new awareness is like? I then did something I never imagined myself doing on a sunny cloudless day. I looked into the cow's eyes and sent him love, and suddenly the veils were pulled back for a moment and he stood in some sort of universal recognition, as the love between us became all that there was.

The animal did not 'disappear' or become 'energy' or any supernatural circa sixties era 'nothing is real' narrative tales. Rather, even more profound, 'he' became visible to me as he actually was. A highly sensitive empathetic gentle manifestation of perfect, divine

intelligence that was a sacrificial symbol of gentility on a violent planet. It would be easy to say that we were 'one', but it was not a blissful merging. It was both profoundly painful and profoundly exquisite. For his predicament was evident and through the eyes of mercy the pain was deep. Through the eyes of grace, I sent him love and understood the power and importance of grace and mercy. Robert Adams teaches that in ultimate spiritual understanding of more evolved cultures, this situation would never occur. Mercy and Grace are Reality.

I drove for hours through 'cow country', the new world now opened by a shift in consciousness that had occurred when I made the decision to move forward into a new life, into 'conscious progression' of ahimsa-non harm. But the initiation into the land of compassion, the journey, was not over. For I was destined to follow a truck of tagged animals for miles, the sorrow of their earthly dillima drifting towards my car in a soft observation and heartfelt sharing, that continued for over an hour. Coincidence? Or 'The Current That Knows the Way' appearing, "the universe rushing in to assist"?

(*Robert Adams Discourse Series: "*The Current That Knows the Way*")

The weather soon changed, the truck pulled over, and they were gone. The huge, liquid eyes reminiscent of the soulful paintings of the Vedic ages of immense beauty hung everywhere when I lived in an ashram, cows walking blissfully with golden bells and garlands of flowers around their necks, not only living in peace but revered with respect for their gentleness and purity. St. Francis drew great attention to the creatures of God put in our care. The great Sage Ramana Maharshi loved a cow so deeply that a sacred alter memorial was created for her. I may not be a great Sage or a Vedic prince, but I never ate meat again. It was as a tree shedding dead leaves, gentle and natural, and the following seasons of growth were richer and deeper in color for it.

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