

Love

on the Rocks

TRUE ROMANCE

SATSANG WITH BOB

by Bob Brill



When Sri Robert Adams (1928-1997) came to Sedona in the 90's I'd been a card-carrying 'romantic' for the good part of my life. My qualifications are the following: I majored in Poetry of the Romantic Period; virtually owned the complete catalogue of Brahms and Chopin – some of which I play on the piano. I have been a lifelong art museum attendee; collector of rock art; art house and foreign film videos, Japanese woodblock prints; and Impressionist paintings. From my early-30's on, I have also become enamored with the mythical gods of India; and anyone whose been to my home knows it to be populated by icons and posters of Krishna, Ganesh, Hanuman, Shiva and Rama.

I have also been a disciple of Sai Baba since 1979 when he came to me in a vision- the morning Ida Rolf died. I had undertaken writing "Aum Sri Sai Ram", tens of thousands of times, into particular Indian notebooks, so his acolytes in India for years could use them for "vibhuti" (sacred, manifested ash) packets. Yes, a true believer, a hopeless 'romantic'.

Robert Adams had been a personal student of Ramana Maharshi [1879 - 1950]; my chief argument with him was over his abject renunciation of discriminating between any one part of reality and another. There I was, this supposed; New York sophisticate, laden with equally sophisticated criteria to analyze the good from the bad, and the beautiful from banal, across the broad band of life and culture – and this guy says none of it is worth a thing. At all!?!*%\$%!

Yet, irony of ironies, Robert himself became a 'romantic' figure for his many disciples right before my eyes. Love, flowers, gifts, and festivities descended upon this fellow for whom nothing meant anything. What kind of disconnect are we talking about here - and what object-lesson can we draw from it?

The Romantic Period of European history was preceded by the Age of Reason - a time of great scientific discovery. Isaac Newton and Benjamin Franklin figured, for instance, among its more famous personalities. Its music was formulaic, elegant, mental, and formal: the Baroque and Classical periods of Bach, Vivaldi, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart.

The Romantic Period by comparison was wildly emotional. Mankind had witnessed the successful revolutions of the American colonies and France by 1800, and freedom of expression was in the air. Towering Romantic personalities enchanted the public as our first real pop stars. Lord Byron, the dazzling poet, was equally famous as a metrosexual, perpetually soused, world-class, rogue cripple. Beethoven, who may have heralded the end of the Age of Reason with the dynamic final movements of his Pastoral Symphony [see Disney's "Fantasia"] was a scandalous, deaf, egomaniacal genius of gargantuan proportions. Frederic Chopin and Franz Liszt introduced both the exotic world-music of the gypsy culture and intense personal morbidity and sexual passion to the musical lexicon. It was a time of thrilling excess, hallucinogenic use, novels of Gothic horror (Poe, Bram Stoker's Dracula, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein), and a rejection of rationality in favor of intuition and raw feeling. By the end, this era was to see the democratic movement give birth to Marxist Communism - and irrationality, to Existentialism, Europe's form of Buddhism and Vedanta.

My Rolfing® in the early 70's, Owen James, tried unsuccessfully to wean me off Chopin in favor of the more orderly Mozart. I would have none of it. Passion was for me – even if it was just passion for the passion of a composer. And oddly, as we came to see in the films "Amadeus" and "Impromptu", the personal lives of these two were diametrically opposite from their composing styles.

"Vaht is dis ting colt "Romonce"? For me it is when something gets legs in

you, strums a lost chord in you. As if a magically hypnotic trail opens up and you just have to go. Something significant~Something we can capture in artistic mediums like song, story, paint and clay. No wonder the fundamentalist Moslems strictly define 'art'. I believe also that it's only the parts of life we still haven't integrated with that strum these siren songs, our incomplections. And while spiritual teachers point to the ineffable as our salvation, the average person wants his trips, his highs, his "somatic hallucinations".

Yes, hallucination. Somatic, but hallucinatory. Romance is somatic tripping in the psychedelic sense, and, fortunately... or not, not very good tripping either. And instead of psychotropic plants and concoctions we hallucinate on the anticipation of imaginary pleasure or pain.

The Romantic paradox is that celebrating the body can sometimes evoke more than the ego can handle. Religions had it somewhat right in condemning forbidden fruits. We're fascinated by the fringes of our tolerances and lionize the Jim Morrisons and Rimbeaus of the world. The Age of Reason and Romance, you see, came after a long, long, religious period of history and people just wanted to have fun.

What Romance is lacking however is substance, pith, a directionality: in a word, reality. And who is it Romantic people get moonie over? People of action and of conviction. People who don't look behind them to see who's following, but just storm samurai-like, directly forward. Charisma may be romantic on the outside; but what has the 75 years of over-opulent, charismatic overload of TV and movie stars added to the public good? Brad Pitt looks like what we feel when we're Right. But Right isn't imaginary, it's seen in the rear view mirror, on-the-fly as you merge with real life through appropriate action. Rightness just works, and that's Truly Romantic.

Something makes you swoon, gets you "off," and you naturally want more of it, no? You're high, you're enchanted, you're in heaven, you're blinded, you're caught in a rush, you've sprouted wings, you imagine you're more whole than you've ever been... Isn't that what life's all about? Even when you're tripping-out on something negative (Remember the Romantic Age was huge on horror stories!), the bio-chemical flooding is nonetheless completely involving. It's almost like integration. One thing about being drunk or stoned – life gets utterly simple: there's only one thing happening, you're high. But no matter how seductive, it is off human purpose. Dr. Rolf was known to have said "Sin is only bad physiology." Suicide bombings are romantic acts in their own context. And the hallucination these folks [Bush's word not mine] are under is obviously one of the most spectacular in modern history – and spreading. Watch out for true believers!

Simple human response is, to my mind, the antidote to Romantic fixation. People reading People aren't the luckiest people of all – it's the people who need people, who show up for other people, who respond simply and reflexively to obvious human conditions around them. They and the ones they support are the lucky ones. What the world needs now isn't more distractions and diversions, it needs simple human response to conditions right before our eyes.

Yes, Romance sells, and sex sells, and bad news sells too. What I hope we all remember this holiday season is the simple human response that defines us as this planet's (potentially) compassionate species, without which culture falls apart. *Happy Holidays!*

Rightness just works, and that's Truly Romantic.

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THE GREAT INVOCATION

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.

Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.

May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known

Let purpose guide the little wills of men -

The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men

Let the Plan of Love and Light work out

And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth

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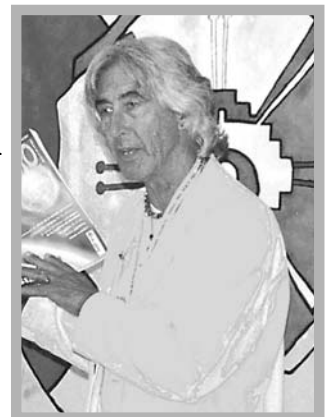
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