Vegetarian Classic

Radical Vegetarianism, A Dialectic of Diet and Ethic
By Mark Mathew Braunstein
Parjandrum Books, Los Angeles 1981, 140 pages. $17.95 hard
$7.95 soft

Radical Vegetarianism is a feast, a feast of words. Its prose barely misses poetry and anyone with a fondness for the English language would read it with relish. Yet beyond his wordsmithing, Braunstein makes in Radical Vegetarianism the point he sets out to: “to persuade ethical vegetarians of the moral necessity of health and to convince those concerned only with nutrition to consider also the unhealthy consequences of perdition.”

Delight in or detest the literary embellishments, no one could find Radical Vegetarianism less than unique. It contains no recipes, no nutrient tables or lists of famous vegetarians (although there are wonderful quotes from many of them). What is offered instead is a dialectic to promote thought and subsequent action. Nutrition is discussed at the outset but the emphasis is on physical and spiritual health as an inseparable partnership. “Not only is physical health possible through vegetarianism.” Braunstein writes, “spiritual health actually demands such a diet.”

An explosive chapter is that on veganism, “The Milky Way.” In the noble tradition of calling a spade out telling about the screams of pain.” Other issues of interest to some vegetarians (the superiority of raw foods, for example, and the practice of fasting) are also given their due.

If vegetarianism has its cult classic, this is it. There is in places brutal honesty, shocking and raw, and in others poignant beauty. Often they coexist in a single sentence. Together they carry the message of radical vegetarianism.

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the vegetarianism that exists in theory and in practice, that is soul-deep and dedicated, that which can make a difference in a life, or on a planet.

—Victoria Moran

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