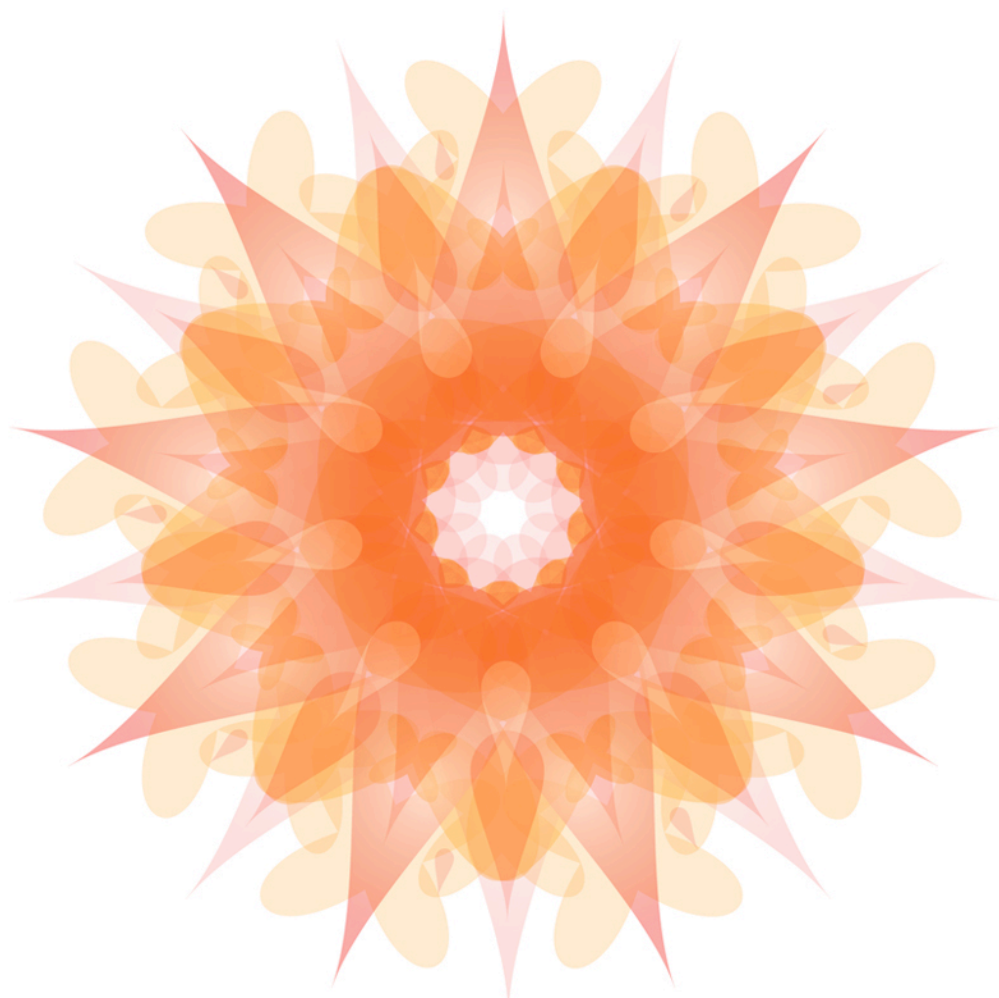


Soul Food

Planet Dreams



April 2008

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Program

01. *Henry David Thoreau*
02. *Dhammapada*
03. *Mohandas K. Gandhi*
04. *Christian Bible, Galatians 6.4*
05. *Zen Buddhist tradition*
06. *Sir Francis Bacon*
07. *`Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings*
08. *Sukhanan-i-Muhammad*
09. *St. Francis of Assisi*
10. *Russell Schweickart, Astronaut*
11. *Rumi*
12. *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*
13. *Duane Herman*
14. *`Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings*
15. *C. E. Flynn, True Greatness*

**To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but
also dream; not only plan, but also believe.**

– Anatole France

01. We bless and curse ourselves. Some dreams are divine, as well as some waking thoughts. Donne sings of one "Who dreamt devoutlier than most use to pray." Dreams are the touchstones of our characters. We are scarcely less afflicted when we remember some unworthiness in our conduct in a dream, than if it had been actual, and the intensity of our grief, which is our atonement, measures inversely the degree by which this is separated from an actual unworthiness. For in dreams we but act a part which must have been learned and rehearsed in our waking hours, and no doubt could discover some waking consent thereto. If this meanness has not its foundation in us, why are we grieved at it? In dreams we see ourselves naked and acting out our real characters, even more clearly than we see others awake. But an unwavering and commanding virtue would compel even its most fantastic and faintest dreams to respect its ever wakeful authority; as we are accustomed to say carelessly, we should never have dreamed of such a thing. Our truest life is when we are in dreams awake.

– Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

02. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is a result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me," in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me," in those who do not harbour such thoughts, hatred will cease. For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.

– Dhammapada, Chapter 1 verses 1-5

03. [God] is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us “unfettered” to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport (Lila), or calls it all an illusion (Maya)... Let us dance to the tune of his bansi (flute), and all would be well.

I have no message to give except this: that there is no deliverance for any people on this earth or for all the people of this earth except through truth and non-violence in every walk of life without any exceptions. Non-violence is the greatest force humanity has been endowed with. Truth is the only goal humanity has. For God is none other than Truth.

I believe that the religion of non-violence springs from the fact that the advancement of one promotes the advancement of all, and the fall of one implies the fall of all. We have therefore been enjoined to show compassion to every living being. The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Truthful people cannot long remain violent.

– *Mohandas K. Gandhi*

04. Each of you should examine your own conduct and then he can measure his achievement by comparing himself to himself and not with anyone else; for everyone has his own burden to bear.

– *Christian Bible, Galatians 6.4*

05. A big, Tough Samurai once went to see a little monk. “ Monk,” he said, in a voice accustomed to instant obedience, “teach me about heaven and hell!”

The monk looked up at this mighty warrior and replied with utter disdain, “Teach you about heaven and hell? I couldn’t teach you about anything. You are dirty. You smell. Your blade is rusty. You’re a disgrace, an embarrassment to the samurai class. Get out of my sight. I can’t stand you.”

The samurai was furious. He shook, got all red in the face, was speechless with rage. He pulled out his sword and raised it above him, preparing to slay the monk.

“That’s hell,” said the monk softly.

The samurai was overwhelmed. The compassion and surrender of this little man who had offered up his life to give this teaching to show him hell! He slowly put down his sword, filled with gratitude, and suddenly peaceful.

“And that’s heaven,” said the monk softly.

– *Zen Buddhist tradition*

06. Certainly, virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed: for prosperity doth best discover vice; but adversity doth best discover virtue.

– *Sir Francis Bacon*

07. We say that differences are of two kinds. One is the cause of annihilation and is like the antipathy existing among warring nations and conflicting tribes who seek each other’s destruction, uprooting one another’s families, depriving one another of rest and comfort and unleashing carnage. The other kind which is a token of diversity is the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of bestowals of the Most Glorious Lord. Consider the flowers of a garden: though differing in kind, colour, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity. This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole. When these different limbs and organs come under the influence of man’s sovereign soul, and the soul’s power pervadeth the limbs and members, veins and arteries of the body, then difference reinforceth harmony, diversity strengtheneth love, and multiplicity is the greatest factor for cooperation.

How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and colour! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof.

– *‘Abdu’l-Baha, from the Bahá’í Writings*

08. Seek for mankind that of which you are desirous for yourself, that you may be a believer; Treat well as a neighbour the one who lives near you, that you may be a Muslim. That which you want for yourself seek for mankind. The most righteous of men is the one who is glad that men should have what is pleasing to himself, and who dislikes for them what is for him disagreeable. Whatever you abhor for yourself, abhor it also for others, and whatever you desire for yourself desire also for others.

– *Sukhanan-i-Muhammad*

09. Lord, Make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood, as to understand, to be loved, as to love, For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

– *St. Francis of Assisi*

Conquer anger by love. Conquer evil by good. Conquer the mean by generosity. Conquer the liar by truth... Never in the world is hatred conquered by hatred: hatred is conquered by love.

– **Hinduism: Dhammapada 223, 5**

10. No Frames, No Boundaries

BUT UP THERE you go around every hour and a half, time after time after time. You wake up usually in the mornings, over the Middle East and over North Africa. As you eat breakfast you look out the window and there's the Mediterranean area, Greece and Rome and North Africa and the Sinai, that whole area. And you realize that in one glance what you're seeing is what was the whole history of humankind for years - the cradle of civilization. And you go down across North Africa and out over the Indian Ocean and you look up at that great subcontinent of India pointed down toward you as you go past it, Ceylon off to the side, then Burma, Southeast Asia, out over the Philippines and up across that monstrous Pacific Ocean, that vast body of water - you've never realized how big that is before. And you finally come up across the coast of California, and you look for those friendly things, Los Angeles and Phoenix, and on across to El Paso. And there's Houston, there's home, you know, and you look out, and you identify with it.... And you go out across the Atlantic Ocean and back across Africa, and you do it again and again and again... And it all becomes friendly to you.

AND YOU IDENTIFY with Houston and then you identify with Los Angeles and Phoenix and New Orleans. And the next thing you recognize in yourself is that you're identifying with North Africa. You look forward to it, you anticipate it, and there it is. And that whole process of what it is you identify with begins to shift. When you go around the Earth in an hour and half, you begin to recognize that your identity is with the whole thing. And that makes a change.

YOU LOOK DOWN there and you can't imagine how many borders and boundaries you cross, again and again and again, and you don't even see them. There you are - hundreds of people in the Middle East killing each other over some imaginary line that you're not even aware of, that you can't see. And from where you see it, the thing is a whole, the earth is a whole, and it's so beautiful. You wish you could take a person in each hand, one from each side in the various conflicts, and say, "Look. Look at it from this perspective. Look at that. What's important?"

AND YOU REALIZE that on that small spot, that little blue and white thing, is everything that means anything to you - all love, tears, joy, games, all of it on that little spot out there.

AND YOU THINK about what you're experiencing and why. Do you deserve this? Have you earned this in some way? Are you separated out to be touched by God, to have some special experience that others cannot have? And you know the answer to that is no. There's nothing you've done that deserves this experience that earned it. It's not a special thing just for you. And you know very well at that moment, for it comes through to you so powerfully, that you are the sensing element for all of humanity, you as an individual are experiencing this for everyone.

YOU LOOK DOWN and see the surface of that globe you've lived on all this time, and you know all those people down there and they are like you, they are you - and somehow you represent them. You are up there as the sensing element, that point out on the end, and that's a humbling feeling. It's a feeling that says you have a responsibility. It's not for yourself. The eye that doesn't see doesn't do justice to the body. That's why it's there. That's why you are out there. And somehow you recognize that you're a piece of this total life. And you're out there on that forefront and you have to bring that back somehow. And that becomes a rather special responsibility and it tells you something about your relationship with this thing we call life.

And that's a change. That's something new. And when you come back there's a difference in that world now. There's a difference in that relationship between you and that planet, and you and all those other forms of life on that planet, because you've had that kind of experience. It's a difference and it's so precious.

–*Russell Schweickart, Astronaut*

11. Beyond this world and life we know there is Someone watching over us. To know Him is not in our power. But once in a glimpse I saw that we are His shadow and our shadow is the world...

– *Rumi*

The greatest comforts and lasting peace are obtained, when one eradicates selfishness from within.

– *Guru Gobind Singh (Sikhism)*

12. It is not enough to say we must not wage war. It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war, but on the positive affirmation of peace. In short, we must shift the arms race into the peace race. Some years ago a novelist died, among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for further stories, the most prominently underscored being this one:

A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together. This is a great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a big house, a great world house in which we have to live together, black men and white men, easterners and westerners, gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Hindus. A family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interest, who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn somehow, in this one big world house, to live with each other.

And this is our great challenge. This means that more and more, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. We must now give an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in our individual societies. This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all embracing, an unconditional love for all men. I'm not speaking of some sentimental and weak response which is little more than emotional bosh. I'm speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as a supreme unifying principle of life.

– *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

13. **POET AS HOUSE BUILDER**

How does a poet build a house?

a mystic?

a seeker of visions?

a seer of things unseen?

With great concentration – and not a little effort.

First, one must grasp the essence of the building.

Then, one must accept its potential and being.

And, one must face its spiritual reality.

After all this, one picks up the hammer slowly, and brings forth:

the essence perceived...

the potential conceived...

the reality received...

The house goes forward – step by step,

piece by piece,

plan by plan.

And, in its own time, the house is finished...

– *Duane Herman*

A dream becomes a goal when action is taken toward its achievement.

– Bo Bennett

14. In this day... [the] means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one... In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved... Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man. Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon.

The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned.

The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed.

The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass.

The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour.

The fifth candle is the unity of nations--a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland.

The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race...

Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

– `Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings

15. True Greatness

A man is as great as the dreams he dreams
As great as the love he bears;
As great as the values he redeems,
And the happiness he shares.
A man is as great as the thoughts he thinks,
As the fountains at which his spirit drinks,
And the insight he has gained.
A man is as great as the truth he speaks,
As great as the help he gives,
As great as the destiny he seeks,
As great as the life he lives.

– C. E. Flynn, *True Greatness*

Man is made by his belief. As he believes, so he is.

– *Bhagavad Gita*

Please join us for refreshments



All Soul Food programs are available for free download from
www.soulfood.com.au

About Soul Food

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes. It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world. Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

Venue

State Library of Victoria
Village Roadshow Theatre
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St
(Enter via La Trobe Street)

Time

10.30am – 11.30am

Dates

First Sunday of every month:

Sunday May 4th, 2008

Sunday June 1st, 2008

Sunday July 6th, 2008

Sunday August 3rd, 2008

Sunday September 7th, 2008

Sunday October 5th, 2008

Sunday November 2nd, 2008

Sunday December 7th, 2008

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia or Western Australia please call 0402 245 752 or visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Study Circles

In response to interest from Soul Food guests, the Bahá'í community is now offering a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people. The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 0402 245 752 or email soulfood@netspace.net.au.

The Bahá'í Community of Victoria

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit www.bahai.org.au. For books on the Bahá'í Faith and related subjects such as spiritual development, world religion, education and more please visit:

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