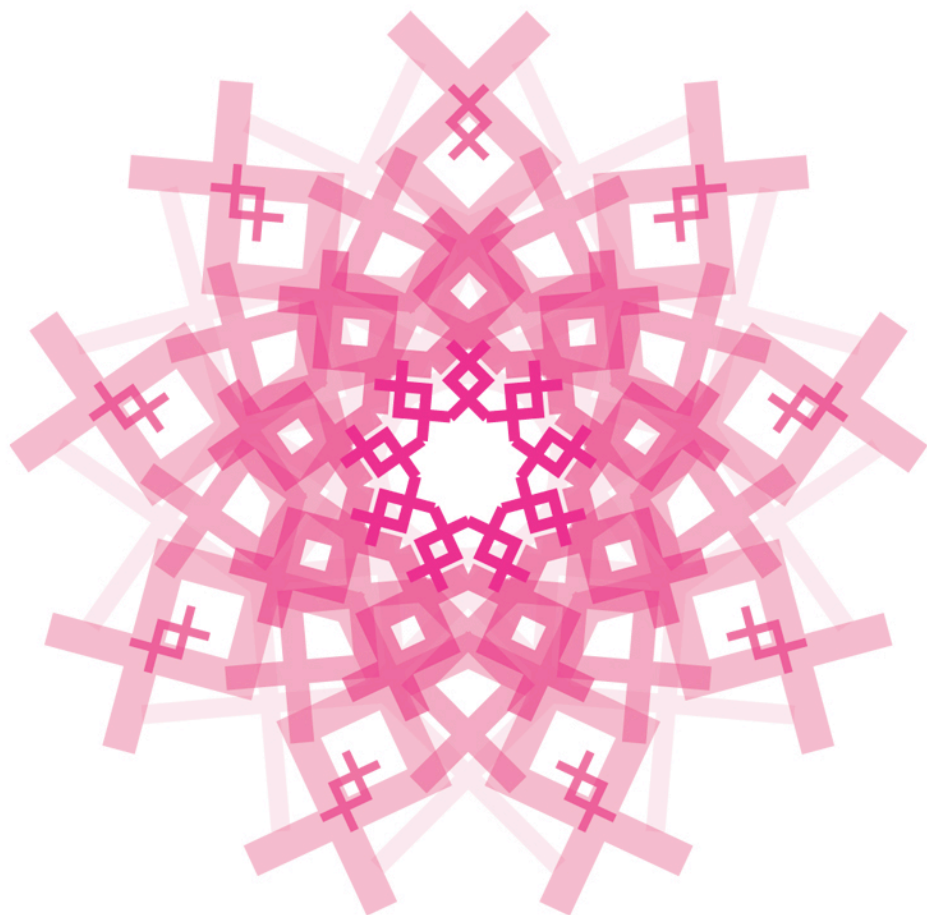


# Soul Food

A New Seed



August 2006

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01. May our ancestors breathe blessing onto us for our eyes to open, and our life purpose to become clear.

– *Dagara prayer, West Africa*

02. In the beginning there was darkness covered in darkness;  
There was no existence, and no non-existence,  
There was no earth, no sky above,  
There was no death, and no immortality.  
There beginning of life floated on the waters of empty space.  
And from fire came the wind,  
and from the wind the waters,  
from the waters came the earth  
and from the earth the seeds of man were created...

– *An ancient song of India*

03. Behold! Our Mother Earth is lying here.  
Behold! She gives of her fruitfulness.  
Truly, her power gives she us.  
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lies here.  
Behold on Mother Earth the growing fields!  
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!  
Truly, her power gives she us.  
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lies here.  
Behold on Mother Earth the spreading trees!  
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!  
Truly, her power gives she us.  
Give thanks to Mother Earth the running streams;  
We see the promise of her fruitfulness.  
Truly, her power gives she us.  
Our thanks to Mother Earth who lies here!

– *Native American, Pawnee hymn*

04. **Symposium**

A single song from the earthly heart of life defeats the most deadly sin;

Lord! Lord!

Give heed to the song that Earth warbles,

Caught in the snare of death.

And weakened as I was from hunger,

And enchanted by Spring.

I understood at that moment the oft-sung melody of Earth,

Coming from thousands of lips,

From small creatures and beasts,

From the waters and plants,

And men,

As it bounced resoundingly,

Brisk,

Far off and inside me,

Like an invocation,

A command and reproach.

Ah! The sweetness of life!

How carefree Earth sings

Like the scarlet-throated goldfinch,

Carried away by the scent of springtime's wild pear tree

And by the warm nest swaying overhead,

With the two shiny eggs in the middle.

It raises its crimson throat and says:

"I'll sing, and then I'll warm them;

But I'll sing first!"...

– *By Nikos Kazantzakis*

05. Master Hogen asked a monk:

"Look at this big old stone. Do you think it is inside or outside your mind?"

The monk replied:

"According to Buddhist teachings, everything is a projection of the mind, so I conclude that it is inside my mind."

Hogan commented:

"Don't you get tired carrying around such a heavy stone?"

– *Zen teachings*

06. Seeing without eyes,  
Hearing without ears,  
Walking without feet,  
Working without hands,  
Speaking without tongue,  
Thus dying without living.  
O Nanak, know this as the way unto thy Lord,  
To be attained unto His cosmic law.

– *Guru Nanak, Sikh Scripture*

07. O Son of the Throne!  
Thy hearing is My hearing, hear thou therewith. Thy sight is My sight, do thou see therewith, that in thine inmost soul thou mayest testify unto My exalted sanctity, and I within Myself may bear witness unto an exalted station for thee.

– *Baha'u'llah from the Hidden Words*

08. The Valley Spirit never dies.  
It is named the Mysterious Female.  
And the doorway of the Mysterious Female  
Is the base from which Heaven and Earth spring.  
It is there within us all-the-while;  
Draw upon it as you will, it never runs dry.

– *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching*

09. Humanity is like a heavy vessel, and like a long road. He who tries to lift the vessel, cannot sustain its weight. He who travels the road, cannot accomplish all its distance. There is nothing that has so many different degrees as humanity; and thus, who tries to nerve himself to compass it, finds it a difficult task.

– *Confucius*

10. I call upon the four winds,  
Earth to ground me,  
Air to teach me,  
Fire to empower me,  
Water to uplift me,  
I honor Grandmother Earth who bore me,  
Grandfather Sky who watches over me,  
And the Creator whose spark  
Is within me and all things.

– *Celtic Invocation*

11. And the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty.

Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples. They are, in truth, cup-bearers of the life-giving water of knowledge and guides unto the ideal way. They direct the peoples of the world to the straight path and acquaint them with that which is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation. The straight path is the one which guideth man to the dayspring of perception and to the dawning-place of true understanding and leadeth him to that which will redound to glory, honour and greatness.

– *Baha'u'llah from the Bahá'í Writings*

12. Bow down thine ear O Lord, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O Thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in Thee. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

– *Psalm 86: 1-4*

13. O ye folk! Serve your Lord who created you and those before you; haply you may fear Who made the earth for you a bed and the heaven a dome; and sent down from heaven water, and brought forth therewith fruits as a sustenance for you; so make no peers for God, the while ye know.

– *Qur'an, chapter of the heifer*

14. It is not only physical bravery that counts. One must have the courage to face up to life as it is, to go through sorrows, and always sacrifice oneself for the sake of others.

– *Kipsigis saying from Kenya*

15. Long Life  
Honey in the Heart  
No Evil  
Thirteen Thank yous.

– *Mayan Prayer*

16. The old tribesman had been gone about an hour. He emerged from the forest with his frayed work shirt now tied around his waist. Bits of leaves and dry grass clung to the sweat on his old skin. He held his machete in front of him as he made his way through the undergrowth. As he entered the clearing, I saw he carried a long pole on his shoulder with a beehive impaled on the end of it. Papa Atanga had brought back what he had set out to find. He carried his load to the tree under which I was sitting and laid it down in the shade. As he approached, I quickly stood up and moved out of his way. Most of the bees had apparently not yet vacated their hive and buzzed angrily about him. The old Ntumu gave me a bemused sidelong glance as I stood watching from a safe distance out in the noonday sun. The bees flew wildly about him and yet they didn't seem to sting him.

He left his prize in the shade, went back to the clearing's edge and soon returned with several broad green leaves, the kind I called "elephant ears" because of their shape and size. He squatted down and carefully laid out the leaves on the ground in front of him. He placed the hive in the centre of the leaves and slowly withdrew the pole. Honey oozed from the wound onto the leaves. The old man gently began to cut up the hive with his machete. The bees became even more agitated and covered his arms and back... The old man seemed unbothered by the bees swarming and crawling over his bare skin. He

took each section of the hive and squeezed it in his hands. The clear golden liquid spread out in a pool on the leaves. “ My elder, why is it that the bees do not eat you?” I asked him in Ntumu. “Sting, not eat” he corrected. Without lifting his eyes from his work, he replied with a proverb: “Homeless bees never sting.” This saying... was chosen to remind me of my place. He watched me to see if I understood the analogy of “homeless bees”.

When all of the honey had been squeezed out of the hive the old man folded up the leaves into a cone-shaped package and sealed the top closed with a spine he had cut from a nearby vine. It didn't leak, a functional origami masterpiece. He stood up and brushed the remaining bees and leaves off his back and put his shirt on. He put the residual wax from the hive and the package of honey into an old basket he slung over his shoulder and prepared to leave. . .He asked, “Do you want to hear an old proverb?”... “I am the child who wants to learn,” ... I said carefully, showing proper deference to my elders. He pointed to the package of honey and said: “Mot ane oka woe” “Man is a leaf of honey”... “How is man a leaf of honey?” I asked. Papa Atanga started off down the path that led to the village... As we walked he explained.

“I will take this leaf of honey back to my village and give it to my first-wife to store. She will drain the honey from the leaf into a special bottle she keeps. When she is finished she will give the leaf to the children. Each will lick the leaf and find some honey to sweeten the tongue. When the last child has finished, he will throw the leaf out behind the hut where the goats sleep. They will have their turn. The other animals, the chickens, the flies, ants and so on will come and find their share of honey left on the leaf.”

The old man paused and stared into my soul with his black eyes, and for the first time smiled at me. “Man is a leaf of honey. This is what you need to know about us.” He repeated this several times to make sure I understood, and then continued: “Man is good and man is precious and, like the leaf of honey, his goodness is inexhaustible. When you think that there is none left, there is still some there to find. This you should not forget.” The old man smiled with the pleasure of someone who has just given a gift to his grandson. This was his first act of kindness towards me. With a nod of his head and a gesture of hand, he silently indicated that he would say no more and that I should go back to the clearing...

That night, back in the village, as I lay awake in my hammock... I saw the significance of this one proverb... He had begun to teach me and like in any good master-apprentice relationship, he knew what I needed to learn.

– *Joseph Sheppherd, from A Leaf of Honey*

17. To live in the moment, each day as it comes, requires a discipline and a cleanliness: its not quite giving up hope, but hope becomes an extension, merely, of the day's awareness, not something set apart like a bank account or accumulation of pledges falling due.

God speaks from the whirlwind:

“Count on nothing at all except that I will love and try you hard and bring all things to an end, including you as you have known yourself all these days past. Your root is in me, child, and the root is here always, and I am here at the golden heart of each frail moment passing -always new. It's death to cling to me, but life to find me.”

– *Frederick Morgan*

18. To arrive at an understanding from being one's true self is called nature, and to arrive at being one's true self from understanding is called culture; he who is his true self has thereby understanding, and he who has understanding finds thereby his true self. Only those who are their absolute selves in the world can fulfil their own nature; only those who fulfil the nature of others can fulfil the nature of things; those who fulfil the nature of things are worthy to help Mother Nature in growing and sustaining life; and those who are worthy to help Mother Nature in growing and sustaining life are the equals of heaven and earth.

– *Confucius*

19. What is to be done, O Moslems? For I do not recognize myself.  
I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem.  
I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;  
I am not of Nature's mint, nor of the circling' heaven.  
I am not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of fire;  
I am not of the empyrean, nor of the dust, nor of existence, nor of entity.  
I am not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulgaria, nor of Saqsin  
I am not of the kingdom of 'Iraqian, nor of the country of Khorasan  
I am not of this world, nor of the next, nor of Paradise, nor of Hell  
I am not of Adam, nor of Eve, nor of Eden and Rizwan.  
My place is the Placeless, my trace is the Traceless;  
'Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved.  
I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds are one;  
One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.  
He is the first, He is the last, He is the outward, He is the inward;  
I know none other except 'Ya Hu'and 'Ya man Hu..'  
I am intoxicated with Love's cup, the two worlds have passed out of my ken...  
If once in my life I spent a moment without thee,  
From that time and from that hour I repent of my life.  
If once in this world I win a moment with thee,  
I will trample on both worlds, I will dance in triumph for ever...

– Rumi, 13th C Persian poet

20. O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace. Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence. Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

– *`Abdu'l-Bahá*

**Please join us for refreshments**



All Soul Food programs are available for free download from  
**[www.soulfood.com.au](http://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 (Entry 3, La Trobe Street)

### Time

10.30am – 11.30am

### Dates

First Sunday of every month:

Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>

Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup>

Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup>

Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>

### 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.bahai.org). 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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