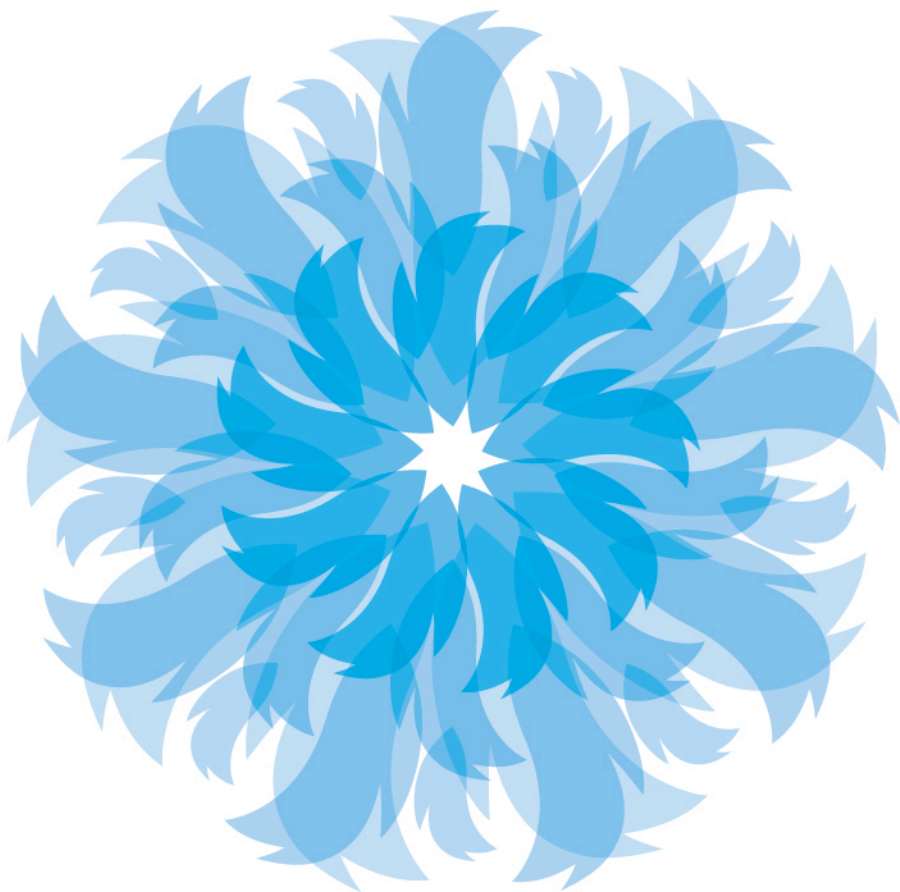


# Soul Food

Two Wings of a Bird



November 2006

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### Program

01. *D.H. Lawrence*
02. *Rainer Maria Rilke*
03. *`Abdu'l-Bahá – Promulgation of Universal Peace*
04. *The Qur'an (Yusuf Ali), Surah 33*
05. *`Abdu'l-Bahá – Promulgation of Universal Peace*
06. *Thomas Jefferson*
07. *AbdulBaha – Paris Talks*
08. *Sojourner Truth*
09. *Shri Guru Granth Sahib – Section 13 - Raag Sorat'h*
10. *`Abdu'l-Bahá – Star of the West*
11. *Shri Guru Granth Sahib – Section 7, Raag Gauree*
12. *Mathnavi of Rumi (E.H. Whinfield tr) – The Masnavi Vol 1*
13. *Bahai Writings*
14. *Shoghi Effendi – God Passes By*
15. *Baha'u'llah – quoted in Women (a compilation of the UHJ)*
16. *Lao tzu, Tao-te ching*
17. *Shao Yung*
18. *Abdu'l-Bahá – Paris Talks*
19. *The Zend-Avesta, Khorda Avesta – Book of Common Prayer*
20. *`Abdu'l-Bahá – Promulgation of Universal Peace*

1. “The source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being.”

– *D.H. Lawrence*

2. “Do not be bewildered by the surfaces; in the depths all becomes law... perhaps the sexes are more related than we think, and the great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in this, that man and maid, freed of all false feelings and reluctances, will seek each other not as opposites, but as brother and sister, as neighbours, and will come together as human beings, in order simply, seriously and patiently to bear in common the difficult sex that had been laid upon them.”

– *Rainer Maria Rilke*

3. The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. There is a right hand and a left hand in the human body, functionally equal in service and administration... If we say one hand is deficient, we prove the inability and incapacity of the other; for single-handed there is no full accomplishment. Just as physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body, must be perfect...

The truth is that all mankind are the creatures and servants of one God, and in His estimate all are human. Man is a generic term applying to all humanity. The biblical statement, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" does not mean that woman was not created. The image and likeness of God apply to her as well. In Persian and Arabic, there are two distinct words translated into English as man: one meaning man and woman collectively, the other distinguishing man as male from woman the female. The first word and its pronoun are generic, collective; the other is restricted to the male. This is the same in Hebrew. To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition...

The status of women in former times was exceedingly deplorable, for it was the belief of the Orient that it was best for woman to be ignorant. It was considered preferable that she should not know reading or writing in order that she might not be informed of events in the world. Woman was considered to be created for rearing children and attending to the duties of the household. If she pursued educational courses, it was deemed contrary to chastity; hence women were made prisoners of the household. The houses did not even have windows opening upon the outside world... Baha'u'llah made women respected by commanding that all women be educated, that there be no difference in the education of the two sexes, and that man and woman share the same rights...

...He has declared that in the estimation of God, there is no distinction of sex. The one whose heart is most pure, whose deeds and service in the Cause of God are greater and nobler, is most acceptable before the divine threshold – whether male or female... Why should man, who is endowed with the sense of justice and sensibilities of conscience, be willing that one of the members of the human family should be... considered as subordinate?... There must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony...

– `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*

4. “Verily the Muslims of either sex, and the true believers of either sex, and the devout men and the devout women, and the men of truth, and the women of truth, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the men who give alms and the women who give alms, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and the men and the women who oft remember God: for them hath God prepared forgiveness and a rich recompense.”

– *The Qur'an (Yusuf Ali), Surah 33*

5. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has greatly strengthened the cause of women, and the rights and privileges of women is one of the greatest principles of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Rest ye assured! Ere long the days shall come when the men addressing the women, shall say: `Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye! Verily ye are worthy of every gift. Verily ye deserve to adorn your heads with the crown of everlasting glory, because in sciences and arts, in virtues and perfections ye shall become equal to man, and as regards tenderness of heart and the abundance of mercy and sympathy ye are superior'.

– *`Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp. 183-184*

6. “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

– *Thomas Jefferson*

7. “As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.”

– *`Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.133*

## 8. Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth dazzled listeners with her wit and originality. She was born into slavery and died a legend. Inspired by religion, her words of empowerment have inspired black women and poor people the world over to this day.

It was May 29, 1851, second day of the first Woman's Rights Convention in the US. Several ministers attended and were not shy in voicing their opinion of man's superiority over women. One claimed "superior intellect", one spoke of the "manhood of Christ," and still another referred to the "sin of our first mother."

Suddenly, Sojourner Truth rose from her seat in the corner of the church. "For God's sake, Mrs. Gage, don't let her speak!" half a dozen women whispered loudly, fearing that their cause would be mixed up with Abolition. Sojourner walked to the podium and slowly took off her sunbonnet. Her six-foot frame towered over the audience. She began to speak in her deep, resonant voice: *"Well, children, where there is so much racket, there must be something out of kilter, I think between the Negroes of the South and the women of the North all talking about rights... But what's all this talking about?"* Sojourner pointed to one of the ministers.

*"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me to any best place. And ain't I a woman?"*

Sojourner raised herself to her full height. *"Look at me! Look at my arm."* She bared her right arm and flexed her powerful muscles. *"I have ploughed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. And ain't I a woman?"*

*"I could work as much, and eat as much as man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain't I a woman?"*

The women in the audience began to cheer wildly. She pointed to another minister. *"He talks about this thing in the head. What's that they call it?"* "Intellect," whispered a woman nearby. *"That's it, honey. What's intellect got to do with women's rights or black folks' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little halfmeasure full?"*

*"That little man in black there! He says women can't have as much rights as men. Cause Christ wasn't a woman."* She stood with outstretched arms and

eyes of fire. "Where did your Christ come from?"... "Where did your Christ come from?", she thundered again. "From God and a Woman! Man had nothing to do with him!" The entire church now roared with deafening applause.

*"If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right-side up again. And now that they are asking to do it the men better let them."*

While it is true that scientific results are entirely independent from religious or moral considerations, those individuals to whom we owe the great creative achievements of science were all of them imbued with the truly religious conviction that this universe of ours is something perfect and susceptible to the rational striving for knowledge. If this conviction had not been a strongly emotional one and if those searching for knowledge had not been inspired by Spinoza's *Amor Dei Intellectualis*, they would hardly have been capable of that untiring devotion which alone enables man to attain his greatest achievements.

– *Sojourner Truth*

9. "Look upon all with the single eye of equality; in each and every heart, the Divine Light is contained."

– *Shri Guru Granth Sahib, Section 13 - Raag Sorat'h*

10. The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance; and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

– *`Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Star of the West, viii, No. 3, p. 4*

11. “The One Immaculate Lord is pervading among all... Among all the women and the men, His Light is shining. In the lamps of the sun and the moon, I see His Light.”

– *Shri Guru Granth Sahib, Section 7 - Raag Gauree*

12. “Where are "We" and "I?" There where our Beloved is!  
O Thou, who art exempt from "Us" and "Me,"  
Who pervadest the spirits of all men and women;  
When man and woman become one, Thou art that One!  
When their union is dissolved, lo! Thou abidest!”

– *Mathnavi of Rumi (E.H. Whinfield tr), The Masnavi Vol 1*

13. “The world of humanity has two wings – one is women and the other is men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.”

– *Baha'i Writings*

#### **14. Story of Tahirih**

“One night, aware that the hour of her death was at hand, she put on the attire of a bride, and anointed herself with perfume, and, sending for the wife of the Kalantar, she communicated to her the secret of her impending martyrdom, and confided to her last wishes. Then, closeting herself in her chambers, she waited, in prayer and meditation, the hour which was to witness her reunion with her Beloved. She was pacing the floor of her room, chanting a litany expressive of both grief and triumph, when the farr'ashes of Aziz Khan-i-Sardar arrived, in the dead of the night, to conduct her to Ilkhani garden, which lay beyond the city gates, and which was to be the site of her martyrdom.

When she arrived the Sardar was in the midst of a drunken debate with his lieutenants, and was roaring with laughter; he ordered offhand that she be strangled at once and thrown into a pit. With that same silken kerchief which she has intuitively reserved for that purpose, and delivered in her last moments to the son of Kalantar who accompanied her, the death of this immortal heroine was accomplished. Her body was lowered into a well,

which was then filled with earth and stones, in the manner she herself had desired.

Thus ended the life of this great Babi heroine, the first woman suffrage martyr, who, at her death, turning to the one in whose custody she had been placed, had boldly declared: *“You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation women.”* Her carrier was as dazzling as it was brief, as tragic as it was eventful. Unlike her fellow-disciples, whose exploits remained, for the most part unknown, and unsung by their contemporaries in foreign lands, the fame of this immortal woman was noised abroad, and travelling with remarkable swiftness as far as the capitals of Western Europe, aroused the enthusiastic admiration and evoked the ardent praise of men and women of divers nationalities, callings and cultures. Little wonder that Abdul’Baha should have joined her name to those of Sarah, of Asiyih, of the Virgin Mary and of Fatimeh, who in the course of successive Dispensations, have towered, by reason of their intrinsic merits and unique position, above the rank and file of their sex.”

– *Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.75*

15. All should know, and in this regard attain the splendours of the sun of certitude, and be illumined thereby: Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. The Dawning-Place of the Light of God sheddeth its radiance upon all with the same effulgence. Verily God created women for men, and men for women. The most beloved of people before God are the most steadfast and those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory.

...The servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane. Blessed is the servant who hath attained unto that which God hath decreed, and likewise the leaf moving in accordance with the breezes of His will...

– *Baha’u’llah, quoted in Women (a compilation of the UHJ), pp. 26, 3*

16. “All things are produced by the Tao, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all things without exception honour the Tao, and exalt its outflowing operation.

Thus it is that the Tao produces (all things), nourishes them, brings them to their full growth, nurses them, completes them, matures them, maintains them, and overspreads them...”

“Then I will take you to that abode of Great Light to reach the Plateau of Absolute Yang. I will lead you through the Door of the Dark Unknown to the Plateau of the Absolute Yin...”

“The Heaven and Earth have their separate functions. The yin and yang have their hidden root...”

– *Lao tzu, Tao-te ching*

17. “Yang cannot exist by itself; it can exist only when it is supported by yin. Hence yin is the foundation of yang. Similarly, yin cannot alone manifest itself; it can manifest itself only when accompanied by yang. “

- *Shao Yung*

18. The most momentous question of this day is international peace and arbitration, and universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage. Children are educated by the women. The mother bears the troubles and anxieties of rearing the child, undergoes the ordeal of its birth and training. Therefore, it is most difficult for mothers to send to the battlefield those upon whom they have lavished such love and care. Consider a son reared and trained twenty years by a devoted mother...

Having brought him through dangers and difficulties to the age of maturity, how agonizing then to sacrifice him upon the battlefield! Therefore, the mothers will not sanction war nor be satisfied with it. So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it.

– `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 134-135

19. “We worship the spirit, conscience, perception, soul... of the holy men and holy women who struggle, will struggle, or have struggled, and teach the Law and who have struggled for holiness.

– *The Zend-Avesta, Khorda Avesta, Book of Common Prayer pt. 2*

20. And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible... Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality. God willing, this is to be so.

– `Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 76-77

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

Village Roadshow Theatrette  
State Library of Victoria  
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St  
(Entry 3, La Trobe Street)

### Time

10.30am – 11.30am

### Date

First Sunday of every month:

Sunday, December 3rd, 2006	Sunday, July 1st, 2007
Sunday, February 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2007	Sunday, August 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2007
Sunday, March 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2007	Sunday, September 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2007
Sunday, April 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2007	Sunday, October 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2007
Sunday, May 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2007	Sunday, November 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2007
Sunday, June 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2007	Sunday, December 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2007

### Further Information

For further information about Soul Food please contact 03 9489 3837 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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