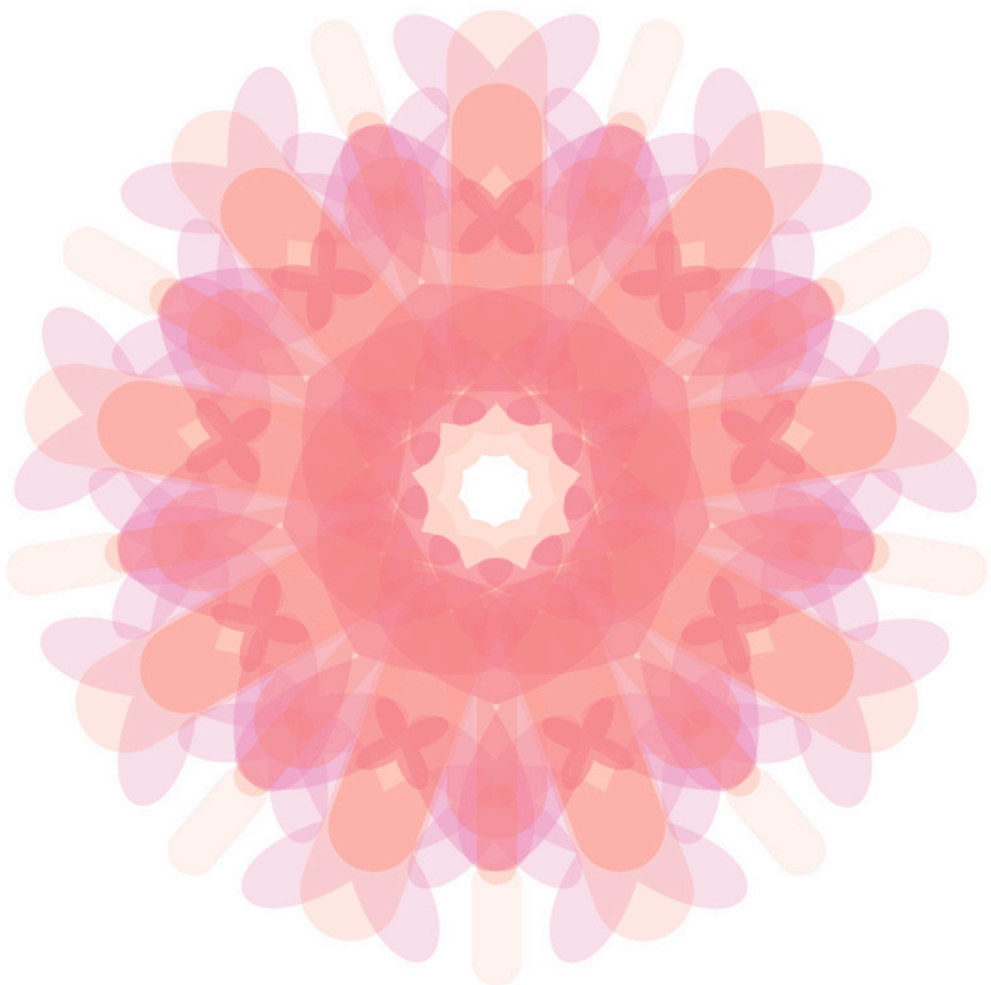


Soul Food

Footprints in the Sand



November 2007

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Program

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

– *Dagara prayer, West Africa*

01. 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

02. The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action... That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race...

Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth... It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens. If thine eyes be turned toward mercy, forsake the things that profit thee, and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned toward justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou chooseth for thyself.

– Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings

03. 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*

04. **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.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Hidden Words*

05. 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*

06. 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*

07. 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 Teaching*

08. 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*

09. 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.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*

10. 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.

– *Old Testament, Psalm 86: 1-4*

11. 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*

12. **O Children of Men!**

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.

Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul. To walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Hidden Words*

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

– *Mayan Prayer*

13. 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*

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*

14. 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*

15. 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

16. **Footprints**

One night a man had a dream.

He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.

For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand:

one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him,

he looked back at the footprints in the sand.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life

there was only one set of footprints.

He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest time of his life.

That really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it.

“Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way.

But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints.

I don’t understand why when I needed you most you would leave me”

The Lord replied, “My son, My precious child, I love you and would never leave you.

During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

– *Native American Tradition*

O Son of Man!

**Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of
My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee,
have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My
beauty.**

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from The Hidden Words*

17. Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature: look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath embosomed the whole earth and all who do well thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and the ignorant. Stranger and friend alike are seated at the table of His favour. Even as the believer, the denier who turneth away from God doth at the same time cup his hands and drink from the sea of His bestowals.

– *Bahá'í Writings*



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 Theatrette
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St
(Enter via La Trobe Street)

Time

10.30am – 11.30am

Dates

First Sunday of every month:

Sunday December 2nd, 2007

Sunday February 3rd, 2008

Sunday March 2nd, 2008

Sunday April 6th, 2008

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. 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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