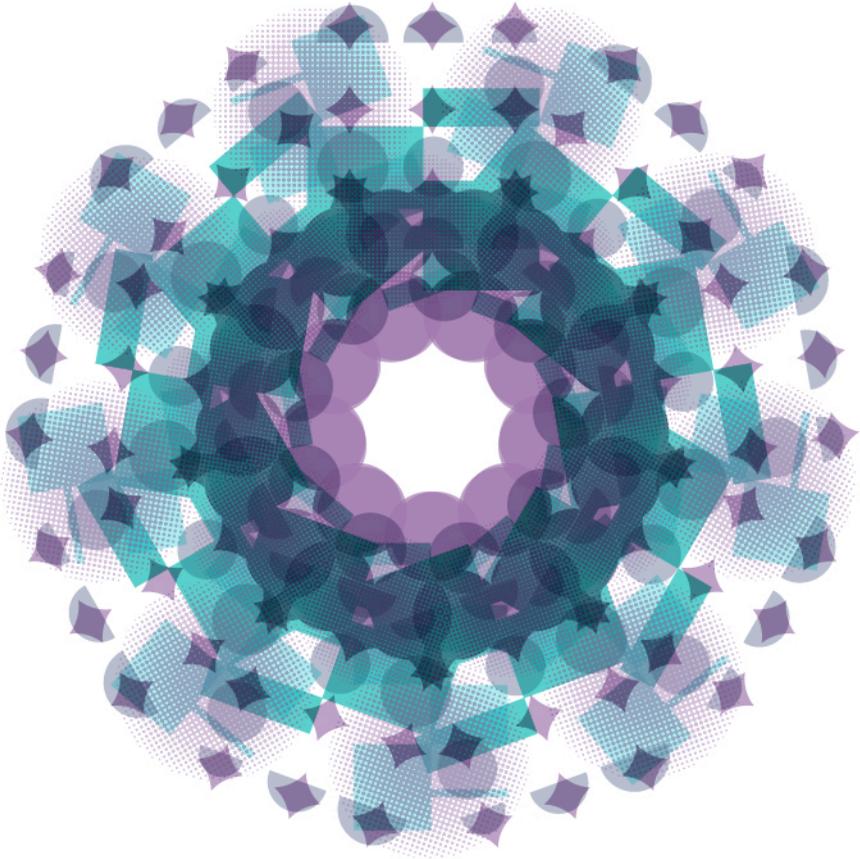


Soul Food

The Valley of Love



The Valley of Love

Exploring the nature of love and how its many forms can carry us through the deepest valleys and the highest mountains, to inspire and transform us.

Program

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13. *Writings on Love from the World's Religions*

**My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly
and radiant heart.**

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

**Inasmuch as love grows in you,
So in you beauty grows.
For love is the beauty of the soul.**

– St. Augustine

01. Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself. Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; for love is sufficient unto love.

– Kahlil Gibran

**One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life:
That word is love.**

– Sophocles (495 BC - 406 BC), Oedipus at Colonus

**In any way that men love Me in that same way
they find My love.**

– Hinduism

02. O Son of Justice

Whither can a lover go but to the land of his beloved? And what seeker findeth rest away from his heart's desire? To the true lover reunion is life, and separation is death. His breast is void of patience and his heart hath no peace. A myriad lives he would forsake to hasten to the abode of his beloved.

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

03. The Story of Catherine Lawes

In 1921, Lewis Lawes became the warden at Sing Sing Prison. No prison was tougher than Sing Sing during that time. But when Warden Lawes retired some twenty years later, the prison had become a humanitarian institution. Those who studied the system said credit for the change belonged to Lawes. But when he was asked about the transformation, here's what he said: "I owe it all to my wonderful wife, Catherine, who is buried outside the prison walls.

Catherine Lawes was a young mother with three small children when her husband became the warden. Everyone warned her from the beginning that she should not set foot inside the prison walls, but that didn't stop Catherine! When the first prison basketball game was held, she went... Walking into the gym with her three beautiful kids and she sat in the stands with the inmates.

Her attitude was: "My husband and I are going to take care of these men and I believe they will take care of me! I don't have to worry!" She insisted on getting acquainted with them and their records. She discovered that one convicted murderer was blind so she paid him a visit. Holding his hand in hers she said, "do you read Braille?" "What's Braille?" he asked. Then she taught him how to read. Years later he would weep in love for her.

Later, Catherine found a deaf-mute in prison. She went to school to learn how to use sign language. Many said that Catherine Lawes was the body of Jesus coming alive again in Sing Sing from 1921 to 1937.

Then, she was killed in a car accident. The next morning Lewis Lawes didn't come to work, so the acting warden took his place. It seemed almost instantly that the prison knew something was wrong. The following day, her body was resting in a casket in her home, three-quarters of a mile from the prison. As the acting warden took his early morning walk, he was shocked to see the toughest, hardest-looking criminals gathered like a herd of animals at the main gate. He came closer and noticed tears of grief and sadness. He knew how much they loved Catherine. He turned and faced the men.

"Alright men, you can go. Just be sure you check in tonight!" Then he opened the gate and a parade of criminals walked, without a guard, the three-quarters of a mile to stand in line to pay their final respects to Catherine Lawes. And every one of them checked back in. Every one!

– *Tim Kimmel*

04. **Four Kinds of Love**

There are four kinds of love.

The *first* is the love that flows from God to man; it consists of the inexhaustible graces, the Divine effulgence and heavenly illumination. Through this love the world of being receives life. Through this love man is endowed with physical existence, until, through the breath of the Holy Spirit—this same love—he receives eternal life and becomes the image of the Living God. This love is the origin of all the love in the world of creation.

The *second* is the love that flows from man to God. This is faith, attraction to the Divine, enkindlement, progress, entrance into the Kingdom of God, receiving the Bounties of God, illumination with the lights of the Kingdom. This love is the origin of all philanthropy; this love causes the hearts of men to reflect the rays of the Sun of Reality.

The *third* is the love of God towards the Self or Identity of God. This is the transfiguration of His Beauty, the reflection of Himself in the mirror of His Creation. This is the reality of love, the Ancient Love, the Eternal Love. Through one ray of this Love all other love exists.

The *fourth* is the love of man for man. The love which exists between the hearts of believers is prompted by the ideal of the unity of spirits. This love is attained through the knowledge of God, so that men see the Divine Love reflected in the heart. Each sees in the other the Beauty of God reflected in the soul, and finding this point of similarity, they are attracted to one another in love. This love will make all men the waves of one sea, this love will make them all the stars of one heaven and the fruits of one tree. This love will bring the realization of true accord, the foundation of real unity.

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

05. Love, and you shall be loved. All love is mathematically just, as much as the two sides of an algebraic equation.

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

06. Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house... Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.

– *Mother Teresa*

**A disciple having asked for a definition of charity,
the Master said “love one another”.**

– *Confucianism*

07. The more we desire to benefit others, the greater the strength and confidence we develop and the greater the peace and happiness we experience. If this still seems unlikely, it is worth asking ourselves how else we are to do so. With violence and aggression? Of course not. With money? Perhaps up to a point, but no further. But with love, by sharing with others' suffering, by recognizing ourselves in all others—especially those who are disadvantaged and those whose rights are not respected—by helping them to be happy: yes. Through love, through kindness, through compassion we establish understanding between ourselves and others. This is how we forge unity and harmony. Compassion and love are not mere luxuries. As the Source both of inner and external peace, they are fundamental to the continual survival of our species.

– *The Dalai Lama*

o8. The Valley of Love

Now is the traveller unaware of himself, and of aught besides himself. He seeth neither ignorance nor knowledge, neither doubt nor certitude; he knoweth not the morn of guidance from the night of error. He fleeth both from unbelief and faith, and deadly poison is a balm to him. The steed of this Valley is pain; and if there be no pain this journey will never end.

In this station the lover hath no thought save the Beloved, and seeketh no refuge save the Friend. At every moment he offereth a hundred lives in the path of the Loved One, at every step he throweth a thousand heads at the feet of the Beloved.

O My Brother! Until thou enter the Egypt of love, thou shalt never come to the Joseph of the Beauty of the Friend; and until, like Jacob, thou forsake thine outward eyes, thou shalt never open the eye of thine inward being; and until thou burn with the fire of love, thou shalt never commune with the Lover of Longing.

A lover feareth nothing and no harm can come nigh him: Thou seest him chill in the fire and dry in the sea. Love accepteth no existence and wisheth no life: He seeth life in death, and in shame seeketh glory. To merit the madness of love, man must abound in sanity; to merit the bonds of the Friend, he must be full of spirit. Blessed the neck that is caught in His noose, happy the head that falleth on the dust in the pathway of His love. Wherefore, O friend, give up thyself that thou mayest find the Peerless One, pass by this mortal earth that thou mayest seek a home in the nest of heaven. Be as naught, if thou wouldst kindle the fire of being and be fit for the pathway of love.

Love setteth a world aflame at every turn, and he wasteth every land where he carrieth his banner. Being hath no existence in his kingdom; the wise wield no command within his realm. The leviathan of love swalloweth the master of reason and destroyeth the lord of knowledge. He drinketh the seven seas, but his heart's thirst is still unquenched, and he saith, "Is there yet any more?" He shunneth himself and draweth away from all on earth.

He hath bound a myriad victims in his fetters, wounded a myriad wise men with his arrow. Know that every redness in the world is from his anger, and every paleness in men's cheeks is from his poison. He yieldeth no remedy but death, he walketh not save in the valley of the shadow; yet sweeter than honey is his venom on the lover's lips, and fairer his destruction in the seeker's eyes than a hundred thousand lives.

Wherefore must the veils of the satanic self be burned away at the fire of love, that the spirit may be purified and cleansed and thus may know the station of the Lord of the Worlds. And if, confirmed by the Creator, the lover escapes from the claws of the eagle of love, he will enter The Valley of Knowledge and come out of doubt into certitude, and turn from the darkness of illusion to the guiding light of the fear of God. His inner eyes will open and he will privily converse with his Beloved; he will set ajar the gate of truth and piety, and shut the doors of vain imaginings.

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

Teach only love for that is what you are.

– *Gerald Jampolsky*

09. **The Divine Essence**

The Perfect One sees the universe face to face and understands its nature. He proclaims the truth both in its letter and in its spirit, and His doctrine is glorious.

The Perfect One lets His mind pervade the four quarters of the world with thoughts of love. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around and everywhere will continue to be filled with love, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure.

– *Buddhist Writings, Teachings of Buddha*

10. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.

– *Martin Luther King Jr.*

11. When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him, though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth. Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.

He threshes you to make you naked.

He sifts you to free you from your husks.

He grinds you to whiteness.

He kneads you until you are pliant;

And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast.

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart, and in that knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart.

– *Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet*

12. **The First Epistle from St. Paul to the Corinthians**

Even though I speak in human and angelic language—but I have no love—I am as noisy and brass as a clashing cymbal. And although I have the prophetic gift and see through every secret and through all that may be known, and have sufficient faith for the removal of mountains—but I have no love—I am nothing. And though I give all my belongings to feed the hungry and surrender my body to be burned - but I have no love - I am not in the least benefited.

Love endures long and is kind. Love is not jealous. Love is not out for display. It is not conceited or unmannerly. It is neither self-seeking, nor irritable, nor does it take account of a wrong that is suffered. It takes no pleasure in injustice but sides happily with truth. It bears everything in silence, has unquenchable faith, hopes under all circumstances; endures without limit. Love never fails.

– *Christian Bible*

13. **Writings on Love from the World's Religions**

Christian

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

Buddhism

Let a man cultivate towards the whole world a heart of love.

Hinduism

One can best worship the Lord through love.

Islam

Love is this, that thou shouldst account thyself very little and God very great.

Judaism

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself.

Bahá'í

Love Me that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not My love can in no wise reach thee.



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's purpose is to inspire us to transform our lives, our neighbourhoods and communities, with actions that promote the unity and betterment of society.

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

11.00am – 12.00pm

First Sunday of every month

February 2nd
March 2nd
April 6th
May 4th
June 1st
July 6th
August 3rd
September 7th
October 5th
November 2nd
December 7th

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania or Western Australia please call 03 9415 6007 or visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Study Circles

The Bahá'í community offers 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 03 9415 6007 or email soulfoodvic@gmail.com.

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.

Supporters

Soul Food is proudly supported by the Baha'i Council of South-Eastern Australia.