

The world of humanity has

two wings -

one is women and the other men.

Not until both wings are

equally developed

can the bird fly.

- Baha'i writings

SOULFOOD

reflective moments



Flight of Angels

Celebrating International Women's Day

Proudly presented by the Baha'i community of Adelaide

The Baha'i Faith celebrates the unity and diversity of the human family,
the essential harmony of all religions and the oneness of the Universal Creator

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Opening Music

ALL BEINGS CELEBRATE CREATION

All of creation is a symphony of joy and jubilation. God has arranged all things in the world in consideration of everything else. And everything that is in heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, is penetrated with connectedness, is penetrated with relatedness.

No wonder angels and humans can join so readily in a common choir - what does this say about race, religion, gender, culture? What does this say about learning to sing with others?

Ecumenism is the law of the universe, a way of wisdom, a return to our origin. On the path of transcendence it is interesting to see how much like the human hands the wings of angels are. We are all marvels of creation, royal persons, called to sing justice back into creation.

- *Hildegard of Bingen (12 century Christian mystic)*

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day is dedicated to the celebration of women's social, economic and political achievements worldwide. Over the years International Women's Day has taken to the streets, sparked off a revolution, met cosily at luncheons and concerts, rubbed shoulders with Royalties and Ministers, Demonstrated at the doors of newspapers and welfare institutions, and has ushered in reform legislations towards a positive futures.

The history of the Day dates back to march 8, 1908, when 15,000 factory women marched through New York city demanding shorter work hours, better pay, and an end to child labour. Since the 1910s, International Women's Day has been widely accepted on a Global scale.

In Australia it was first celebrated in 1928 in Sydney. International Women's Day is about remembering the battles long fought to build a society that is just and fair to all.

HISTORY OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

An early, revered landmark in the evolution of women's rights is Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' brought out in 1792.

On July 19, 1848, the first Women's Rights Convention met in Seneca Falls, New York, at the home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In 1867, in the case of *Chorlton v. Ling*, it was sought to establish that women were persons and as such entitled to the Parliamentary vote.

The 'Married Women's Property Acts' were passed in Great Britain in 1882 and 1893; prior to this, the wife's legal existence was merged with her husband's: 'My wife and I are one, and I am he', expressed it.

In the United States, the 19th Amendment, enacted August 26, 1920, gave women the right to vote. It reads 'the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex'.

However, it was at a gathering at Badasht, Persia, which future historians will recognise as an irrevocable break with the past, and in the course of which women's equality with men was unforgettably proclaimed.

It was at Badasht on July 17, 1848, that the great Tahirih appeared without her veil. With solemn triumph, in the heart of a Muslim nation, she addressed the stupefied gathering, crying out:

"This day is the day on which the fetters of the past are burst asunder".

Freedom for women was so dear to Tahirih that she died for it, becoming one of the first suffragette martyrs.

Musical Reflection

THE WHITE SILK DRESS

Tahirih was one of the most significant women of her time. She was a poet and scholar and she knew the depth of the Qur'an and none could resist her charm and clear intelligence.

One night she had a dream. She saw a young man standing in sky; he had a book in his hands and he read verses out of it. Tahirih wakened and wrote down the verses to remember them and later, when she read them in a commentary by the Bab (forerunner of Baha'u'llah) she believed in Him.

She never saw the Bab and she declared her belief in a long poem sent to him; "The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth and the rays of Thy visage arose on high; Then speak the word 'Am I not your Lord' and 'Thou art, Thou art,' we will all reply. The trumpet-call 'Am I not' to greet, how loud the drums of affliction beat! At the gates of my heart there tramp the feet and camp the hosts of calamity..."

The hosts of calamity followed her in years to come. And finally when she refused to deny her faith was imprisoned in the mayor's house.

One night Tahirih called the mayor's wife into her room. She was wearing a dress of shining white silk. She had put on perfume and the room was fragrant with it. 'I am preparing to meet my Beloved,' she said. 'The hour when I shall be arrested and condemned to suffer martyrdom is fast approaching'.

The Mayor's wife stood at the door and listened to the voice chanting prayers. Then she said 'remember me,' and 'rejoice in my gladness.' She was already beyond the flesh.

She was dressed and ready when they came to take her.

She had brought a silk handkerchief with her; they twisted it round her throat and wrenched it. In August 1852 she gave up her life, she was only 35 years old.

In her last moments she said, 'you can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women'.

- *Marzieh Gail from 'Dawn over Mount Hira'*

Musical Reflection

THE WINGS OF ONE BIRD

It would be ridiculous to talk of male and female atmospheres, male and female springs or rains, male and female sunshine.... how much more ridiculous is it in relation to mind, to soul, to thought, where there is as undeniably no such thing as sex, to talk of male and female education and of male and female schools.

- *Susan B. Anthony (1820 - 1906)*

In this day man must investigate reality impartially and without prejudice in order to reach true knowledge and conclusions. What, then, constitutes the inequality between man and woman? Both are human. In powers and function each is the complement of the other. At most it is this: that woman has been denied the opportunities which man has so long enjoyed, especially the privilege of education....

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... To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition....

It is my hope that the banner of equality may be raised throughout the five continents where as yet it is not fully recognized and established. In this enlightened world of the West woman has advanced an immeasurable degree beyond the women of the Orient.

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. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. 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

The world of humanity has two wings - one is women and the other 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.

- *Abdul-Baha, from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Reflection

IN THE BEGINNING

Life was difficult for aborigines when the world was young, for having neither light nor heat, the people were forced to search for their food in the darkness, and having found it had to eat it raw.

One day, Purukupali (the first man in the world) and his companion, Japara were rubbing two sticks together just to see what would happen when by chance, they found out the way to make fire.

Purukupali realising that they had discovered something that would dispel the darkness, and also give heat for the aborigines to cook their food and to keep themselves warm, gave a large torch of blazing bark to his sister Wuriupranala, and a smaller one to his friend Japara, telling them that whatever happened they must always keep those torches burning.

When the creation period came to an end, and the mythical people were transformed into creatures, plants, and natural forces, Wuriupranala became the sun-woman and Japara became the moon-man.

In the morning, when the sun-woman rises in the east with her torch of blazing bark, the aborigines leave their camps to collect food from the jungle, plain, and sea-coast.

As the sun reaches its zenith, she lightening a fire to cook her food makes the day so hot that the the aborigines retire to the shade of the trees.

About mid-afternoon they continue their food-gathering until the sun-woman disappear over the western horizon.

It is then that the moon-man, Japara, with the smaller torch makes his journey across the sky to overcome the darkness of the night.

- Australian Aboriginal Story of the Sun Woman and Moon Man

So may the Sun and Moon
be with us, and the Changeless One -
may our walk together
be until the end of darkness,
and the end of light -

may our words be like pearls,
and our days be like moonbeams -
may the rivers we live
be waters of much laughing -
in our times, may the world

forget to go to war -
may our songs be the world's song -
may our embraces deepen and ripen,
until at last, we are taken
into the deepness of God Forever-

- *Michael Fitzgerald: 'Holy Passion'*

In the book of Genesis we read that 'God created man in His own image; male and female he created them' (Genesis.1:27), thus affirming that men and women possess identical spiritual natures.

The New Testament contains many examples of the spiritual equality that was expressed in the attitude of Jesus Christ towards women: The inclusion of women as well as of men in the parables, the healing of women and of men, and the crucial role assigned to Mary Magdalene are but the few examples of this perspective.

Much insight might be obtained from John, which tells of the encounter between Jesus and the woman from Samaria; she is treated with a courtesy and respect that amazes the disciples, she is converted by Jesus to the new religion, and she becomes His emissary in proclaiming His coming to the Samaritans in the city of Sychar.

The spiritual condition of women is described in the words of the New Testament, which says, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians. 3:28)

- *from the Christian writings*

In several places in the Qur'an, Mohammad sets out the spiritual equality of men and women. The following passage provides an example:

Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember; Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward.

- *Qur'an 33:35, from the Islamic writings*

The Baha'i vision of equality between the sexes rests on the central spiritual principle of the oneness of mankind. The principle of oneness requires that we 'regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporal form,' and that we foster an unshakable consciousness that, 'if pain or injury afflict any member of the body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest'

Baha'u'llah teaches that the divine purpose of creation is the achievement of unity among all peoples:

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.

- *Baha'u'llah: from the Baha'i writings*

The person who doesn't fit in with our notions of who is worthy of our love—the bag lady at the corner, the strange old man who rides through town on a three-wheel bike all strung up with flags—is just the person who, by not fitting into our patterns, insists that we expand not only our views but also our capacity to love. Today, see if you can stretch your heart and expand your love so that it touches not only those to whom you can give it easily, but also to those who need it so much.

- *Daphne Rose Kingman*

Is any man afraid of change?
Why, what can take place without change?
What then is more pleasing or more suitable to the universal nature?
And can you take a bath unless the wood undergone a change?
And can you be nourished unless the food undergoes a change?
And can anything else that is useful be accomplished without change?
Do you not see then that for yourself also to change is just the same, and
equally necessary for the universe.

- *Marcus Aurelius*

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: ye are the
fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another
with utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.
So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole world.

- *Baha'u'llah: from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Finale

join us for the next program

Sunday the 19th of April, 11am
Radford Auditorium,
Art Gallery of South Australia