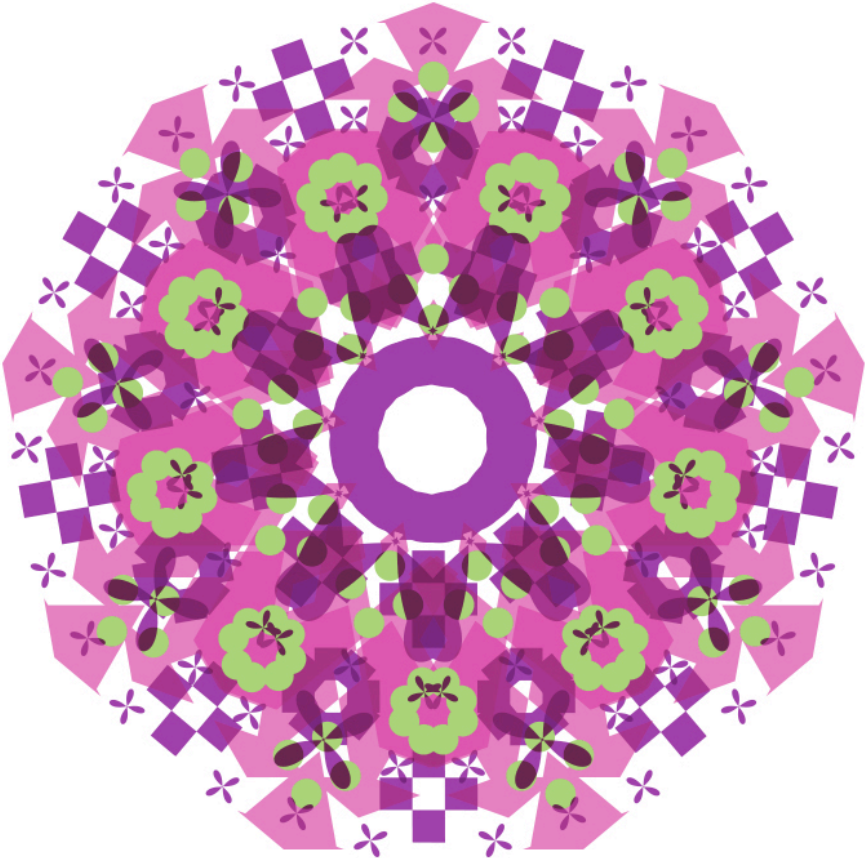


Soul Food

The Inner Landscape



The Inner Landscape

This month's program will explore the inner self and the attributes that can define, uplift and transform us.

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Thank you for turning off your mobile device. We request that you kindly hold your applause until the end of the program.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

– Bahá'u'lláh, The Bahá'í Writings

01. **The Inner Landscape**

All that which is found inside can be known thanks to the outside.

God did not wish it, that everything He gave to man for his own and for his profit should remain hidden... And if He has concealed certain things, He has given each one a mark visible from outside by means of particular signs – like a man who has buried some treasure and, in order to find it again, marks the spot.

We discover all that a mountain hides thanks to the exterior signs and through correspondences; and in a same way we find out all the properties of plants and what there is inside stones. There is nothing in the depths of the sea, nothing in the heights of the firmament, that man is not capable of discovering.

No mountain is so vast as to conceal what it encloses from the eyes of man. Everything is revealed by signs... In the same way, all that a man encloses can be seen from the outside, and thus, by observing the exterior we can get to know the inside...

– Anon

02. Holy Passions

Somehow, the inner landscape
has come back from being ruins –
somehow, it now resembles terrain –
I am anxious to plant some good seed –
I want to lay down some solid furrows –
this fall, I will put in some mulch –
the inner man, the inner person
listens to itself and its world –
it will let you know who you are –
just this week I felt like I let go
from holding my breath the last
twenty years – just now, I feel as if
I can live my own life instead
of the life the expectations mongers
had planned for me – this is not
a way of talking about my day
this is a mirror – see in it
if you like – see if you are there.

– *The Holy Passions, Michael Fitzgerald*

03. **Gems from the Buddhist Teachings**

Wake up! It is time to wake up!
You are young, strong- why do you waver,
Why are you lazy and irresolute?
This is not the way to wisdom.
Be strict with speech, control your mind,
Let not the body do evil.
This is the way to wisdom.
These the three roads leading to it.
Meditation brings wisdom,
Lack of meditation is folly.
These are the two roads,
One leading forward and one leading backwards.
Choose the right one,
The one that leads to wisdom.
Not one tree- cut down the whole forest!
There is danger in the forest.
Cut down the forest of desires, O bhikkus,
And discover the road to liberation.

– *Buddhist Teachings, The Dhammapada*

04. **Traditions of the Prophet**

God has declared: I am close to the thought
That my servant has of Me,
And I am with him wherever he recollects Me.
If he remembers Me in himself,
I remember him in Myself,
And if he remembers Me in a gathering
I remember him better
Than those in the gathering do,
And if he approaches Me
By as much as one hands length,
I approach him by a cubit,
And if he approaches Me by a cubit,
Then I draw nigh to him by two hands length.
If he takes a step towards me, I run towards him.

– *Islam, Traditions of the Prophet*

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, *The Hidden Words*

05. When one sees nothing but the One,
hears nothing but the One,
knows nothing but the One-
there is the Infinite.
Where one sees another,
hears another, knows another –
there is the finite.
The Infinite is immortal,
the finite is mortal.
It is written,
He who has realized eternal Truth
does not see death, nor illness, nor pain;
he sees everything as the Self,
and obtains all.

– *Chandogya Upanishad, Hindu scriptures*

06. Jesus saw the little ones being fed.
He addressed His disciples:
These babes being nursed
Are like those entering the Kingdom.
They asked: "Shall we enter the Kingdom?
We are small."
When you make two into one
And what is within like what is without,
And what is without like what is within.
And what is above like what is below,
And when you unite male and female in one
So that the male is no longer male,
And the female is no longer female,
When you make eyes in place of an eye
And a hand in place of a hand,
And a foot in place of a foot
And an image in place of an image,
Then you shall enter the Kingdom.

– *Nag Hammadi manuscripts, The Gospel according to Thomas*

07. The Buddhist way has three principal features: morality, meditation and wisdom. Morality is the indispensable basis of the system. The essence of Buddhist morality is contained in the five precepts (pancasila): to abstain from taking life, from falsehood, from taking what is not given... from sexual misconduct, and from using intoxicants and drugs, which tend to cloud the mind. Upon the foundation of a serious resolve to keep these precepts can then be built the practice of meditation, or concentration (Samadhi).

– *Ling, A History of Religions East and West*

08. Meditate profoundly, that the secret of things unseen may be revealed unto you, that you may inhale the sweetness of a spiritual and imperishable fragrance, and that you may acknowledge the truth that from time immemorial even unto eternity the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, guidance from error, happiness from misery, and roses from thorns.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, The Bahá'í Writings*

09. 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 undergoes 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 universal nature.

– *Marcus Aurelius*

10. ...reflect upon the perfection of man's creation, and that all these planes and states are folded up and hidden away within him. Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form When within thee the universe is folded? Then we must labour to destroy the animal condition, till the meaning of humanity shall come to light.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, The Bahá'í Writings*

11. **Meditation**

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects: in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight: when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God.

Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man: they are like waves moving in the sea without result. But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed.

The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror: if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these. But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained. Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed- turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects- so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit. May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven.

– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Bahá’í Writings*

12. **On Self-knowledge**

And a man said, Speak to us of Self-Knowledge
And he answered, saying:
Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and the nights.
But your ears thirst for the sound of your hearts knowledge.
You would know in words that which you have always know in thought.
You would touch with your fingers the naked body of your dreams
And it is well you should.
The hidden well-spring of your soul must needs rise and run murmuring
to the sear;
And the treasure of your infinite depths would be revealed to your eyes.
But let there be no scales to weigh your unknown treasure;
And seek not the depths of your knowledge with staff or sounding line.
For self is a sea boundless and measureless.
Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth."
Say not, "I have found the path of the soul."
Say rather, "I have met the soul walking upon my path."
For the soul walks upon all paths.
The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed.
The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals.

– *Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet*

**By degrees, little by little, from time to time,
a wise person should remove his own impurities
as a smith removes the dross from silver.**

– *Buddhism, Dhammapada 239*

13. A Coyote and his family lived near a forest. In the forest was a great old hollow tree, and Woodpecker and his family lived there. One day, as Coyote was walking he met Woodpecker. "How are you today, my friend?" said Coyote. "Very well, thank you," replied Woodpecker. "And how are you?" They talked together for a while. Then Coyote said, "Friend Woodpecker, bring your wife and children tonight and join my family for supper." "Thank you, friend Coyote," said Woodpecker. "We will gladly come."

That evening, Woodpecker and his family went to the coyotes' home. They fluttered to the ground and then, as they always do after flying, the woodpeckers stretched themselves. As they lifted their wings, the coyotes could see their pretty red and yellow feathers underneath. And as the woodpeckers ate supper, whenever they raised their wings, their bright feathers could be seen. After the woodpeckers had eaten they thanked their host politely. "Please come to our house tomorrow for supper, friend Coyote," said Woodpecker. And Coyote said yes, he and his family certainly would.

After the woodpeckers left, Coyote turned to his family and said, "Did you see how those woodpeckers showed off their bright red and yellow feathers? No doubt they think they are more beautiful than we are, and they want to be sure we know it. Well, we will show them that coyotes are just as beautiful as woodpeckers."

The next day, Coyote made all his family work hard gathering many loads of firewood. When evening came, he built a big fire and called his family there. He tied a burning stick to each of them, under their arms, so that the burning end pointed forward. Then he did the same to himself. "Now we coyotes will show those woodpeckers who has beautiful colours!" he told his family. "And don't you forget to raise your arms often, to be sure they see we are just as good as they are!" Then the coyotes went to the woodpeckers' house. When they came to the hollow tree, Woodpecker welcomed them and invited them in very politely. Together, the woodpecker family and the coyote family sat down to supper. As they ate, the coyotes kept raising their arms to show the bright fire underneath. But suddenly one of Coyote's sons yelled, "Aye! My fire is burning me, papa!" "Hush!" said Coyote. "Don't give us away." "Ah!" sighed one of Coyote's daughters. "My fire is out!" This was too much for Coyote, and he scolded her.

The Woodpecker spoke. "Tell me, Friend Coyote," he said, "Why is it that your colours are bright red and yellow at first but later become ash grey?" "Oh, that," said Coyote, smiling pleasantly although he was very angry inside. "That is the best thing about our colours, for they do not stay the same – as other people's do – but turn many shades." Coyote made an excuse so that he and his family could leave, for they were all smarting from their burns.

After they left, Woodpecker gathered his family around and said, “Now, my children, you have seen what Coyote has tried to do. Never pretend to be what you are not. Always be just what you really are, and you will never need to put on false colours.”

– *Wendy Heller, Thoughts – Education for Peace and One World*

14. **Serenity Prayer**

God grant me the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed
Courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference
Living one day at a time
Enjoying one moment at a time
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace
Taking this sinful world as it is
Not as I would have it
Trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with you forever in the next.

– *Reinhold Niebuhr*

15. The souls must be trained... Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful as yet, do as does the sculptor of a statue that is to be made beautiful; he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until he has shown a beautiful face upon his statue. So do you also; cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is shadowed, labour to make all glow with beauty, and do not cease chiselling your statue until there shall shine out on you the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the final goodness surely established in the stainless shrine.

– *Plotinus, The Enneads 1.9*

16. Dynamics of Prayers

First Step:

Pray and meditate about it. Use the prayers of the Manifestations as they have the greatest power. Then remain in the silence of contemplation for a few minutes.

Second Step:

Arrive at a decision and hold this. This decision is usually born during contemplation. It may seem almost impossible of accomplishment but if it seems to be an answer to a prayer or a way of solving the problem, then immediately take the next step.

Third Step:

Have determination to carry the decision through. Many fail here. The decision, budding into determination, is blighted and instead becomes a wish or a vague longing. When determination is born, immediately take the next step.

Fourth Step:

Have faith and confidence that the power will flow through you, the right way will appear, the door will open, the right thought, the right message, the right principle, or the right book will be given you. Have confidence and the right thing will come to your need. Then as you rise from prayer, take at once the 5th step.

Fifth Step:

Act as though it had all been answered. Then act with tireless, ceaseless energy. And as you act, you, yourself, will become a magnet, which will attract more power to your being, until you become an unobstructed channel for the Divine power to flow through you.

Many pray but do not remain for the last half of the first step. Some who meditate arrive at a decision, but fail to hold it. Few have the determination to carry the decision through, still fewer have the confidence that the right thing will come to their need. But how many remember to act as though it had all been answered? How true are these words "Greater than the prayer is the spirit in which it is uttered" and greater than the way it is uttered is the spirit in which it is carried out.

– *Attributed to Shoghi Effendi, The Bahá'í Faith*

17. O Son of Spirit!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I moulded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, The Bahá'í Writings*

**One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years
of pious worship...**

– *'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Bahá'í Writings*



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

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.

