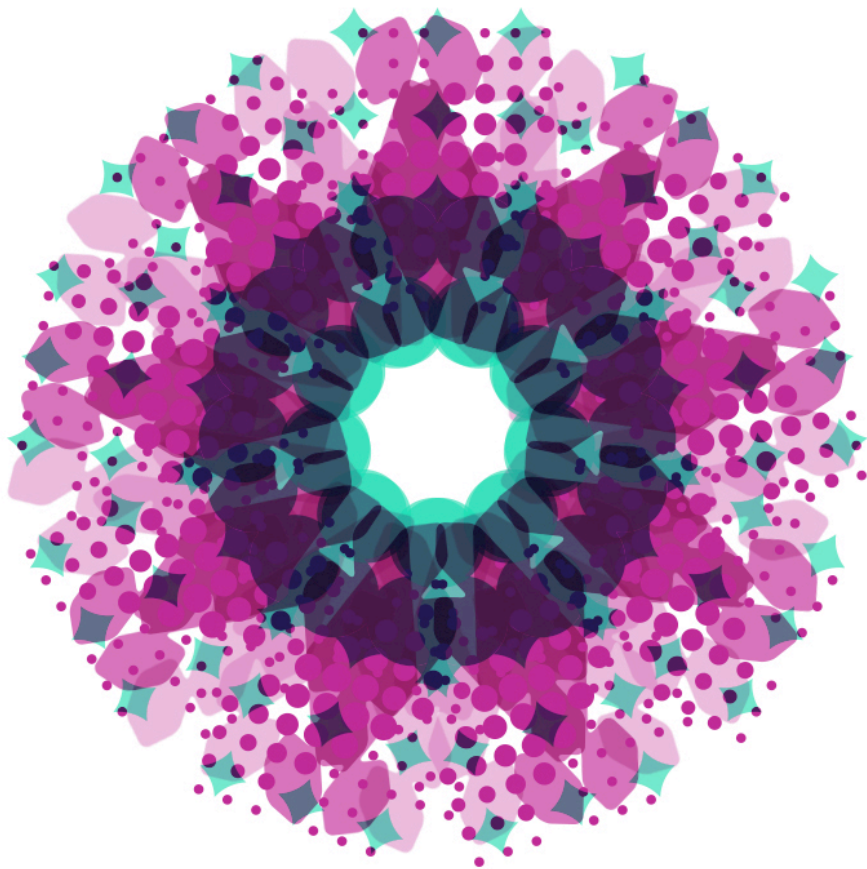


# Soul Food

Syllables & Sounds



# Syllables & Sounds

This month's program will explore the power of words, speech and sound, and how their inspired usage can touch and transform the human soul.

## Program

01. *Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*
02. *James 3:7-12, The Holy Bible*
03. *Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*
04. *Buddha, the Word, The Eightfold Path*
05. *Paolo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
06. *The Story of Helen Keller, Sacred Moments by Linda Popov*
07. *Linda Popov, The Family Virtues Guide*
08. *Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*
09. *Gaston Bachelard*
10. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace*
11. *Kent Nerburn, Neither Wolf nor Dog*
12. *Yunus Emre*
13. *Anon, The Power of Words*
14. *Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet*
15. *Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*
16. *Mathnavi of Rumi (E.H. Whinfied tr), The Masnavi Vol 1*
17. *Louis Colaianni, The Joy of Phonetics and Accents*
18. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayer*

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

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word  
was with God, and the Word was God.**

*– John 1:1*

01. Man is the supreme Talisman... Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value.

*– Bahá'u'lláh*

02. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

*– James 3:7-12*

**Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt,  
that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.**

*– Colossians 4:6*

03. Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets. Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depths of the Holy Writings.

*– Bahá'u'lláh*

**The wise ones fashioned speech with their thought,  
sifting it as grain is sifted through a sieve.**

*– Buddha*

04. What, now, is Right Speech? It is abstaining from lying; abstaining from tale-bearing; abstaining from harsh language; abstaining from vain talk.

There, someone avoids lying, and abstains from it. He speaks the truth, is devoted to the truth, reliable, worthy of confidence, is not a deceiver of men. Being at a meeting, or amongst people, or in the midst of his relatives, or in a society, or in the king's court, and called upon and asked as witness, to tell what he knows, he answers, if he knows nothing: "I know nothing"; and if he knows, he answers: "I know"; if he has seen nothing, he answers: "I have seen nothing," and if he has seen, he answers: "I have seen." Thus, he never knowingly speaks a lie, neither for the sake of his own advantage, nor for the sake of another person's advantage, nor for the sake of any advantage whatsoever.

He avoids tale-bearing, and abstains from it. What he has heard here, he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there; and what he heard there, he does not repeat here, so as to cause dissension here. Thus he unites those that are divided; and those that are united, he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord, and it is concord that he spreads by his words.

He avoids harsh language, and abstains from it. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, going to the heart, courteous and dear, and agreeable to many.

He avoids vain talk, and abstains from it. He speaks at the right time, in accordance with facts, speaks what is useful, speaks about the law and the discipline; his speech is like a treasure, at the right moment accompanied by arguments, moderate and full of sense.

This is called right speech.

– *Buddha*

05. Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world... Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.

– *Paolo Friere*

***Whatever words we utter should be chosen  
with care for people will hear them and be  
influenced by them for good or ill.***

***– Buddha***

## **06. The Story of Helen Keller**

When Annie Sullivan arrived at the Keller home, she was fresh from the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston and eager to teach. Six-year-old Helen was her first ‘pupil’. An illness had left Helen blind and deaf when she was only nineteen months old. Her parents refused to institutionalise her, and she tyrannized the family with her violent tantrums, unceasing movement and wild, animal-like ways. She destroyed almost everything she touched. At the dinner table, she refused to eat from her own plate. She thrust her hands into other people’s plates and smeared the food around and into her mouth. She was never still, except occasionally when she would allow her mother to hold her.

Annie devoted herself to teaching this wild child. Her training ill prepared her to deal with Helen’s rages. She realized there could be no real change until she could get Helen away from her loving but over-indulgent family. The tide turned when Annie insisted on taking Helen to a guest cottage on the family property. She intuitively felt that ‘obedience is the gateway through which knowledge, yes and love too, enter the mind of the child...We had a terrific tussle...the struggle lasted for nearly two hours. I never saw such strength and endurance in a child.’

It was on a day soon after Annie won the battle of wills with the child that Helen suddenly grasped the meaning of the words Annie signed into her hand. Helen Keller recalls that day as the most important day of her life, the day the world opened to her. ‘The mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that ‘w-a-t-e-r’ meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, joy, set it free.

**Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was  
without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of  
another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and  
my heart leaped to the rapture of living.**

**– Helen Keller**

## **07. Speak the Language of the Virtues**

Language shapes character. The way we speak and the words we use, have great power to discourage or to inspire. Our language has great power to influence the lives of others. Whether telling a baby how patient she has been, waiting to be fed, or encouraging a bullying teen to tap into his compassion, giving performance feedback to an employee, or telling someone what we love about them, language is a mirror of how we value others.

Language is also the vehicle of thought. Peace Pilgrim, a woman who walked across America for the cause of peace, said, “If we knew how powerful our thoughts were, we would never again have another negative thought.” When our words are weighty, we need to weigh our words. And they always are.

The language of virtues helps us to replace shaming and blaming with personal responsibility and respect. It is a frame of reference for bringing out the best in each other. It helps us to become the kind of people we want to be.

*– Linda Popov*

**To speak a true word is to transform the world.**

**– Paulo Freire**

08. Every word is endowed with a spirit... It behoveth a prudent man of wisdom to speak with utmost leniency and forbearance so that the sweetness of his words may induce everyone to attain that which befiteth man's station.

– *Bahá'u'lláh*

09. I am a dreamer of words, of written words. I think I am reading; a word stops me. I leave the page. The syllables of the word begin to move around. Stressed accents begin to invert. The word abandons its meaning like an overload which is too heavy and prevents dreaming. Then words take on other meanings as if they had the right to be young. And the words wander away, looking in the nooks and crannies of vocabulary for new company, bad company.

– *Gaston Bachelard*

**Speech is the mirror of the soul; as a man speaks, so he is.**

– *Publius Syrus*



10. Today the greatest need of the world of humanity is discontinuance of the existing misunderstandings among nations. This can be accomplished through the unity of language. Unless the unity of languages is realized, the Most Great Peace and the oneness of the human world cannot be effectively organized and established because the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts. The heart is like a box, and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains. Therefore, the question of an auxiliary international tongue has the utmost importance. Through this means international education and training become possible; the evidence and history of the past can be acquired. The spread of the known facts of the human world depends upon language. The explanation of divine teachings can only be through this medium. As long as diversity of tongues and lack of comprehension of other languages continue, these glorious aims cannot be realized. Therefore, the very first service to the world of man is to establish this auxiliary international means of communication. It will become the cause of the tranquillity of the human commonwealth. Through it sciences and arts will be spread among the nations, and it will prove to be the means of the progress and development of all races. We must endeavor with all our powers to establish this international auxiliary language throughout the world. It is my hope that it may be perfected through the bounties of God and that intelligent men may be selected from the various countries of the world to organize an international congress whose chief aim will be the promotion of this universal medium of speech.

– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

11. People should think of their words like seeds. They should plant them, then let them grow in silence. Our old people taught us that the earth is always speaking to us, but that we have to be silent to hear her. There are lots of voices besides ours. Lots of voices.

– Kent Nerburn

**To talk well and eloquently is a very great art, but that an equally great one is to know the right moment to stop.**

**– Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

12. A single word can brighten the face of one who knows the value of words.  
Ripened in silence, a single word acquires a great energy for work.  
War is cut short by a word,  
and a word heals the wounds,  
and there's a word that changes poison into butter and honey.  
Let a word mature inside yourself.  
Withhold the unripened thought.  
Come and understand the kind of word that reduces money and riches to dust.  
Know when to speak a word and when not to speak at all.  
A single word turns the universe of hell into eight paradises.  
Follow the Way. Don't be fooled by what you already know. Be watchful.  
Reflect before you speak.  
A foolish mouth can brand your soul.  
Yunus, say one last thing about the power of words –  
Only the word "I" divides me from God.

– Yunus Emre

### 13. **The Power of Words**

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one."

Friends are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share a word of praise, and they always want to open their hearts to us.

– *Anon*

**Spread the love of God through your life but  
only use words when necessary.**

– *Mother Teresa*

14. And then a scholar said, Speak of Talking.

And he answered, saying:

You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts;

And when you can no longer dwell in the solitude of your heart you live in your lips, and sound is a diversion and a pastime.

And in much of your talking, thinking is half murdered.

For thought is a bird of space, that in a cage of words may indeed unfold its wings but cannot fly.

There are those among you who seek the talkative through fear of being alone.

The silence of aloneness reveals to their eyes their naked selves and they would escape.

And there are those who talk, and without knowledge or forethought reveal a truth which they themselves do not understand.

And there are those who have the truth within them, but they tell it not in words.

In the bosom of such as these the spirit dwells in rhythmic silence.

When you meet your friend on the roadside or in the market place, let the spirit in you move your lips and direct your tongue.

Let the voice within your voice speak to the ear of his ear;

For his soul will keep the truth of your heart as the taste of the wine is remembered when the colour is forgotten and the vessel is no more.

– *Kahlil Gibran*

**But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.**

– *Matthew 4:4, King James Bible*

15. Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word "Fashioner" issuing forth from his lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce...No sooner is this resplendent Word uttered than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the Revelation of this Name.

– *Bahá'u'lláh*

**Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye  
may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom  
that lie hid in its depths...This is the changeless Faith of God,  
eternal in the past, eternal in the future.**

– *Bahá'u'lláh*

16. He said, God speaks words of power to souls,  
To things of naught, without eyes or ears,  
And at these words they all spring into motion;  
At His words of power these nothings arise quickly,  
And strong impulse urges them into existence.  
Again He speaks other spells to these creatures,  
And swiftly drives them back again into Not-being.  
He speaks to the rose's ear, and causes it to bloom;  
He speaks to the tulip, and makes it blossom.  
He speaks a spell to body, and it becomes the soul  
He speaks to the sun, and it becomes a fount of light.  
Again, in its ear He whispers a word of power.

– *Rumi*

17. Sound has a profound effect on the senses. It can be both heard and felt. It can even be seen with the mind's eye. It can almost be tasted and smelled. Sound can evoke responses of the five senses. Sound can paint a picture, produce a mood, trigger the senses to remember another time and place. From infancy we hear sound with our entire bodies. When I hear my own name, I have as much a sense of it entering my body through my back or my hand or my chest as through my ears. Sound speaks to the sensorium; the entire system of nerves that stimulates sensual response.

– *Louis Colaianni*

18. Reveal then Thyself, O Lord, by Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy divine being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendor...

– *'Abdu'l-Bahá*

**Your own words are the bricks and mortar of the dreams you want to realize. Your words are the greatest power you have. The words you choose and their use establish the life you experience.**

– *Sonia Croquette*



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'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**

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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.bahai.org.au).

## **Supporters**

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



