

## **Course Outline, Book 6**

**Ruhi Book 6: *Arising to Serve*** is the sixth in a course sequence designed to raise up human resources capable of fostering the growth of the Baha'i Community with efficiency and love. The units of the Ruhi Institute aim, in their entirety, at achieving three overall objectives: providing insights into spiritual matters, imparting knowledge about the Faith, and helping to develop specific acts of service. After Book 2's initial introduction to teaching and having now gained some practical experience, the participants in the program are no doubt eager to embark on a more in-depth exploration of the subject of teaching in Book 6.

*Excerpted from "To the Collaborators":* This book consists of three units. The first, "The Spiritual Nature of Teaching", is intended to enhance the participants' understanding of the spiritual significance of teaching. The second, "The Qualities and Attitudes of the Teacher" provides the opportunity to reflect on the attributes that a teacher of the Cause should strive to acquire. In the third unit, "The Act of Teaching", approaches to personal teaching endeavors and collective campaigns are discussed.

Among the various themes treated in the units, two run through the entire book and are explored in various contexts. Those who act as tutors of the course should ensure that the participants acquire a thorough understanding of the ideas involved.

The first of these themes is on "being" and "doing" as two inseparable dimensions of Baha'i life. It is emphasized that to become effective teachers we must strive daily to refine our inner lives and, at the same time, engage regularly in teaching and gain experience. Unfortunately, in today's world, creating dichotomies is a widespread habit of the mind which can be easily carried over into the Baha'i community. Should I study or pioneer? Should I attend to the needs of my family or serve the Faith? Should I concentrate on perfecting myself or should I teach others? Accepting this last dichotomy -- which is, in the final analysis, imaginary -- paralyzes the individual believer, and it is hoped that this course will help its students avoid such paralysis.

The second theme, as important as the first, is about learning. It is maintained that effectiveness in teaching, both individual and collective, can be developed over time, if we approach it in a posture of learning. Experience indicates that the realization of this simple fact and a willingness to adopt the characteristics that define such a posture can open the door to success.

The book moves from the abstract to the practical, focusing attention on the concepts, qualities, attitudes and skills that enhance one's capability to teach.

### **Unit 1: The Spiritual Nature of Teaching**

**Purpose:** To understand that teaching is an act of particular spiritual significance. To appreciate that effective teaching involves both "being" and "doing" -- attention to one's inner condition as well as constant activity.

*Excerpted from "To the Collaborators":* The first unit works largely at the level of concepts: the nature of a duty prescribed unto us by the Manifestation; the commandment to teach as a token of God's bounty; enkindlement; the relation between teaching and knowledge; sacredness; teaching as a sacred duty of every Baha'i; teaching as the unlocking of the gates to the city of the human heart; teaching as an act that sets in motion a process of spiritual transformation; the Word of God as the power that effects this transformation; and the role of love in teaching.

To say that the first unit largely deals with concepts does not mean that discussion should remain at the level of abstractions. The tutor of the group should see to it that the purpose of the various exercises is indeed accomplished, namely, that understanding is profound enough to affect attitudes and to motivate the participants to equip themselves with the necessary skills and abilities. Particularly, in a world from which the very notion of sacredness is disappearing, in which almost everything is reduced to an act of buying and selling, the students need to emerge from the course with an acute awareness of "the sacred", conscious that, when teaching, they are interacting with the human heart and the myriad spiritual forces that guide a person to recognition and then to certitude.

## **Unit 2: The Qualities and Attitudes of the Teacher**

**Purpose:** To reflect on the qualities and attitudes of a teacher of the Cause. To understand that effectiveness in teaching can be developed if we approach it in a posture of learning -- engaging in activity, reflecting on what we have said and done, and turning regularly to the writings for insights and guidance.

*Excerpted from "To the Collaborators":* The second unit explores the spiritual qualities and attitudes of the teacher. The initial sections are dedicated to reflection on such qualities as purity of heart, selflessness, faith, courage, wisdom, detachment, humility and ardor. The development of spiritual qualities is a theme that is addressed repeatedly in the books of the Ruhi Institute, but in different contexts. Here the purpose is to identify the implications of these attributes for teaching; therefore, the discussion of the group should go beyond generalities and focus on how each quality enhances the teacher's effectiveness.

Attitudes have to do with our responses to situations, and have their roots in our culture, our upbringing, our memories, our past experience and, of course, in our spiritual qualities. Our openness towards people and the sympathy we have for their struggle to understand the truth are examples of attitudes that affect teaching. In this unit the discussion of attitudes in the latter sections is built on

the insights gained into spiritual qualities through the study of the first sections. The flow of ideas occurs naturally in the treatment of humility as an essential requisite for a posture of learning. A learning attitude towards teaching, resulting from true humility, lies at the heart of all the attitudes that are praiseworthy in a teacher.

It is hoped that the ideas covered in these sections will convince the students that, in their teaching endeavors, they need to follow a pattern on consultation, action and reflection -- to engage regularly in the act of teaching, to reflect on the results of their efforts, to consult with their fellow believers on the effectiveness of what they have said and done, to turn to the writings for answers to the questions that arise, and to modify their methods in the light of experience and the insights gained from the study of the writings. A first fruit of this action and reflection should be an understanding of how the principle of moderation operates in teaching: that the degree of receptivity of each individual determines how he or she should be approached -- whether boldly or cautiously, whether directly or indirectly, whether with a challenging or conciliatory tone.

In going through this unit with the group, the tutor must realize that the perfection of spiritual qualities and the conscious change of attitudes do not occur without effort. An important initial step is, of course, to understand the relevant concepts. For example, understanding the concept of generosity and its implications for behavior contributes to the development of this attribute. But, beyond understanding, one must possess the will and the sincere desire to advance spiritually. Will and desire are not created by mere intellectual discussion; there is need for deep and profound reflection by each individual on his or her inner state. It is the task of the tutor, then, to create an environment conducive to such reflection -- an environment that does not give rise to feelings of guilt, that does not call for confessions, that does not encourage accusations, one in which a group of friends can dispassionately discuss both abstract and practical matters, leaving each to reflect privately on what is required of him or her.

### **Unit 3: The Act of Teaching**

**Purpose:** To become familiar with some of the approaches and methods of personal teaching endeavors and collective campaigns.

**Practice:** To design and implement your own personal teaching plan and to participate in at least one teaching campaign.

*Excerpted from "To the Collaborators":* The third unit focuses on the act of teaching itself. The skills and abilities that a teacher of the Cause must strive to develop are considered in the context of both personal plans and collective projects. Here again, a false dichotomy -- the holding of these two facets in teaching is counterposition to each other -- can sometimes leave a Baha'i

community paralyzed. The passages presented in this unit and the corresponding exercises are aimed at creating the resolve in the student to become involved in both types of teaching throughout his or her Baha'i life.

Some crucial concepts which the group is to examine with the assistance of the tutor are: that proclamation is one element of teaching, but alone does not constitute teaching, which entails dialogue between confirmed believers and those willing to investigate the truth of Baha'u'llah's claim; that while we should lose no opportunity to proclaim the Faith and teach indirectly, at this point in human history when receptivity is high, we need to acquire and refine the skills and abilities of direct teaching; that our challenge today is to win over to the Cause large numbers, yet enrollment should not be the only outcome sought by our teaching efforts; that teaching does not end when a person enrolls in the community, but should continue until the declarant becomes a confirmed and ardent supporter of the Faith; that for a sustained process of large-scale expansion and consolidation, institute programs are essential in order to develop human resources who will nurture the steadily growing numbers of believers.

In the context of direct teaching, a few sections of the third unit analyze the content of the message to be conveyed to the seeker. This is done with the aid of an example, in this case that of a young person teaching one of her friends. The introduction to the Faith outlined here should not be taken as a formula to be used indiscriminately. What is important for the participants to realize is that their presentation should not consist of a random selection of ideas and principles and that a great deal of thought has to be given to formulating it.

Finally, the participants of the course are asked to devise a personal teaching plan and to participate in at least one national, regional or local campaign. This practical experience is essential if they are to derive full benefit from the study of the book. The tutor will, of course, help them with their efforts in this direction, calling upon the assistance of the relevant institutions -- Auxiliary Board members, Assemblies and committees.