

The Baha'i Faith and I: Calligraphy and Music

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My performance in primary school was not bad, but was terrible in lower secondary school. It was so bad, in fact, that I had to give up on the idea of going to public high school and chose instead a vocational course at a private vocational high school. Typically, the academic standards at private vocational high schools are such that university is usually not an option. My performance here improved, however, so I was able to attend university.

At the university orientation I learned that by taking a course in education, I could earn a teaching license, so I decided to become an elementary school teacher. I like children, so I thought that teaching would be a good profession for me, but I faced a big obstacle. I wanted to be an elementary school teacher, but my university only offered license courses for middle and high school education. I did not, however, want to abandon my plan to become an elementary school teacher since I had very good memories of elementary school, but less pleasant memories of middle and high school. Based on my memories, I believed that elementary school-aged children were pure, bright and shining. To solve this problem, I consulted with the education committee in Osaka, which informed me that I could receive an elementary education teaching credential by completing a correspondence course after graduating.

Unlike middle and high school teachers, elementary school teachers need to teach all subjects, including music. I joined a chorus group to prepare myself to teach music, and it was one of the chorus members who introduced me to the Baha'i Faith. I later learned that Baha'u'llah called teaching one of the most admirable professions.

I at last became an elementary school teacher and began teaching children. The environment which surrounds children today is harder than when I was a child. I have to be serious about instilling virtues and good attributes. Children are very sensitive and are good at spotting even the slightest lie or half-hearted effort, so teachers need to guide children with love and mercy. Then came the day when the students tested me!

One day, while teaching calligraphy, one of my 5th grade students told me that my writing was terrible. This motivated me to improve my calligraphy. I made it my goal to write each student's name on his or her graduation certificate using calligraphy. The task of writing the name of each student who is graduating, with love for them, is the greatest joy, honor, and prayer of a teacher. I prayed that my students' memories of elementary school would be like gold.

My goal as a calligrapher was to reach the 4th *dan*, and last year I achieved the 3.5 *dan*. During the last Baha'i summer school in Yamaguchi and Sendai I took the test for 5th *dan*, and, to my surprise, I passed! Before taking the test, I had expected to pass the 4th *dan*, but I also thought, "What if I achieve my goal?" "Should I continue calligraphy if I do?" I felt that Baha'u'llah wanted me to continue, so I did.

This year, I had another chance to teach calligraphy at the Yamaguchi Summer School. I felt that calligraphy could be a bridge between the children's hearts and myself. I then realized that music and calligraphy have three things in common: strength and softness; fast and slow tempos; and rhythm. When I write the words of Baha'u'llah I can put my heart into my calligraphy the most. *The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord.*

Abdu'l-Baha. *Paris Talks*, p. 53