

3. New version for Gurus

THE Baala Vikaas (organizational wing for children's development) is the primary basis of the great movement to restore *dharma* (righteousness) in the world. The elders are far gone in their ways, and it is difficult to expect change in their habits and attitudes. Children have to be led into good ways of living, into simplicity, humility and discipline. The parents have to be persuaded lovingly, through the example of bright, cheerful and co-operating children from the Baala Vikas classes, to send their children also to these classes. As you know, you cannot draw children to your side if you hold a stick in your hand; you will have to hold some sweets instead. So the *Gurus* have to be embodiments of love and patience.

The ideal of the Baala Vikas is to raise a generation of boys and girls who have a clean and clear conscience. The actual syllabus is not so important as the creation of an atmosphere where noble habits and ideals can grow and fructify. The Baala Vikas pupils follow Baala Vikas discipline and curriculum only for one day in the week and attend their usual schools on the other days. So the impact of the *Guru* has got to be extra strong if it has to act as a catalyst in the process of modification of the behaviour patterns of these pupils.

Promote respectful behaviour to elders

The home too must feel the change in the child's behaviour. It may be advisable to gather the mother of the children once a month, or even more frequently, and give them guidelines on child care and on the higher ideals of family and social life. You can suggest to them ways and means of following up the work of the Baala Vikas in proper upbringing of children, while allowing freedom to these children at home. While allowing them due freedom, they should nevertheless hold harmful tendencies in check. They should promote respectful behaviour to elders in the family. They should be careful how they themselves behave in the presence of children, for youngsters learn a lot by emulation. A spirit of understanding and sympathy has to pervade the home. This can be emphasized with the mothers at these gatherings. This would be a necessary supplement to the Baala Vikas. The homes in which the Baala Vikas children grow, as indeed all homes, have to be clean and with vibrations free from hatred, envy, greed, spite and hypocrisy. The food that the child takes in has to be *saathwik* (pure).

Between the age of two and five the child's mind is profoundly affected by the behaviour of those nearest it, so the parents must take care to set a good example.

Workers, office-bearers, *Gurus* and Seva Dhal (Service Crops) members of the Sathya Sai Organisation all over the world, all must remember that they are subject to the scrutiny of the public, wherever they are and whatever they do. They must be free from the habits and practices which they recommend others to give up. The *Gurus* should not leave their own children out of the Baala Vikas class; they should not lose their temper; they should keep their emotions under control and not exhibit depression, dejection or a wavering Will. The quality of work is more important than the quantity, so they should not undertake to do more than what they can render satisfactorily. Let their own conscience be the judge: if they feel that they have discharged their duty sufficiently to the children or to society, then they may rest content.

Solve the problems with discrimination and love

Of course the environmental conditions for the propagation of spiritual ideals such as simple living, spiritual search and loving service, are lacking. *Gurus* have to deal with the children of

families that are often not already devotees of Sai or of any other form of Divinity. Sometimes the husbands of *Gurus* may discourage the dedicated fervour with which the work is undertaken. But even as it is, I know that great success has been achieved in spreading the Baala Vikas movement in the country. There is, however, still much more scope of expansion of this work, especially in the slum areas and in the villages.

There are also other problems of all sorts. Solve them with discrimination and deep love. Meet these problems with a desire to serve the children better and they will be overcome easily. Gradually you will realise that the Baala Vikas is devised not merely for the education of the children but also of the *Gurus*. The Baala Vikas chores are bound to elevate and sublimate the thoughts and emotions of the *Gurus* far better than any other *saadhana* (spiritual discipline) can. Remember that as *Gurus*, you too have a *Guru* guiding you and overseeing your *seva* (service). So you too are pupils, and you too learn the lessons of equality, equanimity and selfless love while acting as *Gurus*.

Saints & seers of all lands are equally great

In the Baala Vikas classes you must try to have children from various faiths, so that friendship between them can grow into understanding, and the understanding into love. Do not talk about differences between religions in the beginning; rather stress the obvious similarities, so that the tender minds in your charge are not confused. Tell your pupils stories from the scriptures of all religions so that they can realise that the saints and seers of all lands are equally good and great,

Let the children realise that prayer is universal and that prayer in any language addressed to any Name reaches the same God. Let them understand that God can be invoked through a picture or an idol to fulfil man's sincere desire, provided it is helpful to others as well as to oneself. Love can bind all children together for they have not yet learned to hate. Love can, similarly, unite all mankind, provided man is cured of greed, envy, desire, and attachment. The *Guru* should bring into his pupil's way the common factor of good advice about human conduct contained in the scriptures of all religions.

The *Vedhas* teach that man should adore and worship God in gratitude for His benedictions. The Bible teaches: that he should pray for peace and practise charity. The Quran would have man show mercy to the suffering and to surrender his will to the All High. The Buddhist texts teach the lesson of detachment and sense-control. The Zendavesta exhorts man to get rid of evil propensities and shine in his own innate glory. The *Guru* has to imbibe all these qualities and then teach them to his pupils by precept and example.

Let your heart be not hardened by hatred

More than all else, the *Guru* must be equipped with *sahana* (tolerance) and a calm and quiet temper. He should be prepared to meet, without being ruffled, the buffetings of the environment. When some one inquires whether you have a calm temper, do not get enraged. Some people get angrier and angrier when they are asked this. Even when you have to speak harshly to a child or parent because all other means of bringing a point home have failed, let your heart be soft, let it not be hardened by prejudice or hatred.

You must equip yourself for this task of-seva (service) by some individual *saadhana* done daily with sincerity and regularity. The *Pranava* (primeval sound OM) recital is one form of such spiritual effort. It is laid down at Prashaanthi Nilayam that the early dawn recital of Om should

be done twenty one times. This number is not arbitrarily fixed; it has a significance of its own. We have the five *karmendhriyas* (senses of action) and the five *jnaanendhriyas* (senses of perception); we have also *praanas* (the five vital energies or airs) to sustain us. Then we have the five *koshas* (sheaths), enclosing the Divine Spark that is the Reality. These total up to twenty. Hence the recitation of *Om* twenty one times purifies and clarifies all these twenty components and makes man the twenty-first entity, ready for the final merger with Reality.

The *Jeevathathwam* (life-principle) merges with *Parathathwam* (the Supreme Reality). *The jeevathathwam* may be pictured as a rider on the twenty-headed horse. Finally, you end the *Pranava* recital with the recital of '*shaanthy*' three times. That completes the process of clarification and purification. The first call for *shaanthy* (peace chant) is for the purity of the *aadhibhouthik* (body) part of the Self. The second call is for the purity of the *aadhidhaivik* (the mind). The third is for the purification of the *aadhyathmik* (the spirit). This *Pranava* recital will tone you up, calm all agitations in the mind and quicken the downpour of Grace.

***Om* must be recited with deliberation**

Om is the primeval sound, the sound caused by the vibrations of creation through the Emergent Will of the formless and attributeless (the *Niraakaara*, *Nirguna Brahman*), and is referred to as *Sabdhabrahman* (divine transcendental sound). It is a composite of the sounds of 'A' 'U' and 'M.' Just as G, O and D, taken together is pronounced 'God,' (not 'jeeodee') so too the letters A, U and M are uttered as '*OM*.' 'A' emanates from the gullet, U from the tongue lying in the interior of the mouth and M from the lips. But when *Om* is uttered, the sound emanates from the region of the navel.

Om must be recited slowly and with deliberation. The sound must be like an aircraft, first approaching from a distance to the spot where you are and then flying away again into the distance (soft at first, but gradually becoming louder and louder and then slowly relapsing into silence, this silence after the experience being as significant as the *Pranava*). 'U' is the zenith, the *Kailaash* (abode of God), reached by the sound in its adoration. 'A' is the initial naadir, and 'M' the final.

In the *Sri Chakra*, the mystic figure in which the *Paraashakthi* (the Cosmic energy principle, and the deity presiding over it) is invoked and installed, *Om* is the very centre, and around it are all the other symbols placed. Man too must do this installation. *Om* is the real life-principle of every *manthra* (sacred formulae), of every man (symbolically speaking). *Manthra* is what saves man, man being but the *maha* (mind), with which he can meditate on the *manthra*.

You can have this *Pranava saadhana* (practice of the transcendental sound) by watching the breath as it goes in and out, and listening in silence to the *Soham* ('so'---the 'silent' sound audible when the breath goes in and, 'ham'---the 'silent' sound audible when it goes out). You have to ponder over the meaning of *Soham* (I am That). What are you? You are That; you are a Spark of the Divine. You are not the body, senses, mind, intelligence, etc., with which you now identify yourselves. You are God, only caught in 'deluding yourselves that you are bound by this body.

Saadhana of this sort is a must for all Sai workers for that alone can give them *shaanthy* and the other most valuable gift, *prema* (love). It will change their vision and enable them to witness Unity where formerly they were confounded by diversity---diversity of language, religion, nationality, creed, colour and caste. Baala Vikas can be best served only after cultivating this

new vision. So both the *Gurus* and the pupils should decide to practise spiritual *saadhana* faithfully, and consider the Baala Vikas work too as a part of it.

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