

# Helping Others to See

Caring

Compassion

Leadership

Humility

Service

## STORY

For people at the Aravind Eye Hospital in Mudurai, India, Dr. V is a hero. Both a village elder and a hospital chief, he insists that his staff provide "impeccable service" and guides his institution of compassion with a glance, a word, a silent presence, a smile. As Gandhi once said, "My life is my message." Dr. V's unique blend of being and doing is his message. Thanks to support from the Seva Foundation, he and his staff perform 92,000 cataract surgeries a year and 850,000 treatments to prevent blindness. "If you allow the divine force to flow through you, you will accomplish things far greater than you imagined," says Dr. V. In this story, Seva's founder, Ram Dass, explains how their support for Dr. V – balances "being and doing" -- or compassionate Actions and compassionate hearts -- so they can do the most good for others in the world.

## ACTIONS

- Study and diagram the human eye. Invite an ophthalmologist to speak about caring for our eyes. Conduct eye exams and screenings with a nurse or Health Department.
- Study and discuss how Seva integrates spirituality and social activism. Write an essay.
- Ask students to develop a list of ways to practice being compassionate while doing service.
- Read from Ram Dass' books, *How Can I Help* and *Be Here Now*. Write reaction papers.

## Language Arts

### Reflection Questions

1. What do you think it means to blend of being and doing?
2. What does Gandhi mean when he says, "My life is my message"?
3. What is the difference between being compassionate in our Actions and in our hearts?
4. What is a "great teaching"? Can you think of any examples?

### Lessons You Can Learn

1. We can experience great joy when we do something beautiful for others.
2. Being able to see is a great gift. The miracle of surgery helps restore it to those who lost it.
3. Cultures like Hinduism have special ways of incorporating their values into their lives.
4. Being + doing = being a humanitarian and doing good things.
5. Compassion can be just as important as competent medical skills.

## Social Studies

- Study cultural traditions that help strengthen family ties, like Dr. V's family sessions.
- Compare the health services in foreign countries like India to those in our own country.
- Research cataracts and other visual problems that can be corrected by surgery.

## Community Service

- Organize a used prescription eyeglasses drive for people in underdeveloped countries through Lenscrafters or medical relief agencies.
- Send for Seva's catalogue with gifts that are made by poor people from different cultures.
- Create a list or directory of "eye" resources in your community.
- Arrange for students to volunteer for "Read for the Blind."

This story is featured on the *Stone Soup for the World* audio tape.