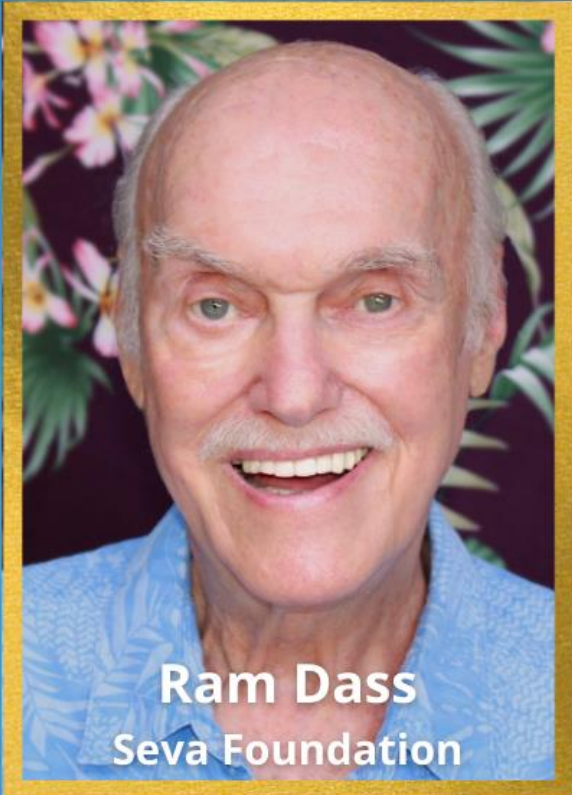
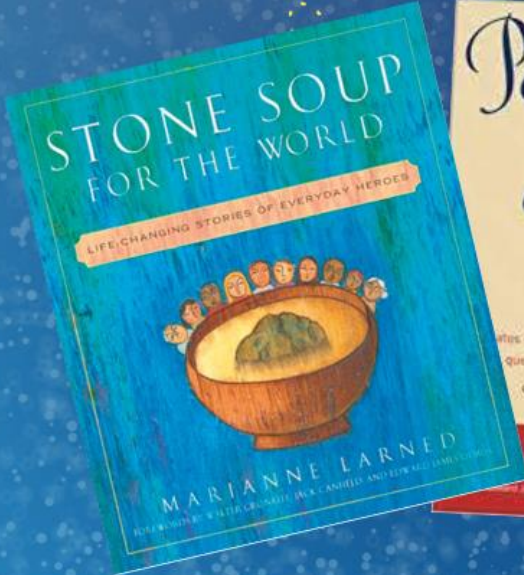


**Helping  
Others  
to See**

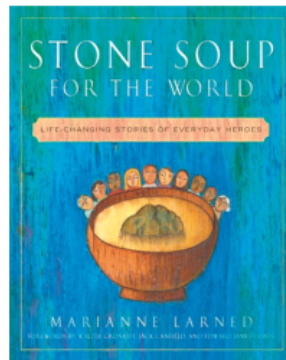


**Ram Dass**  
Seva Foundation



# Story of the Week!

@StoneSoupLeader



## HELPING OTHERS TO SEE Told by Ram Dass

If you are at a point in your life where you are ready to grow, to push yourself a little, to open your heart to a deeper compassion, drop in at the Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India. Offer yourself as a volunteer—for as long as you are comfortable. Even a week would work, as it did for me. Then watch with awe as Dr. V. or Thulasi, his second-in-command, finds a place just for you.

In your “free” time, don’t miss 6:00 A.M. in the waiting room of the hospital, when Dr. V. walks about in the river of humanity. Hundreds of village folk stand in lines, waiting patiently for inexpensive, often free, outpatient eye care. In an adjoining wing, long lines of the blind and the near blind, guided by friends and relatives, await the ten-minute miracle of surgery that will give them back their sight.

Or join Dr. V.’s sister, a brilliant eye surgeon in her own right, as she, after six hours of surgery, leads a class of nurses in meditation and song.

After you have wandered around enough to begin to understand what this hospital is really about, ask Dr. V. if you can visit one of his Sunday-morning family sessions with his brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, in-laws, and all the children. Each week a different child presents something: It could be one of the holy stories of India through which the Hindi people contemplate

*Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*

their values and incorporate them into their lives. Or a political issue, a world public-health issue, an environmental issue, a family issue. After the presentation, all three generations hang out together and discuss the way they can put into practice the values brought forth in the presentation.

Dr. V. is a hero to these people for alleviating preventable and curable blindness in the world. He is a winner of the highest honors, and “chief” of this huge, world-class eye hospital complex. A strangely arresting man—with his gnarled arthritic hands and feet, his gray rumpled suit, his seventy-odd years, and a perfect “poster man” at the same time—a brilliant mirror of compassion to all.

In the waiting-room scene at sunrise, Dr. V. is simultaneously the fellow villager that he once was, and continues to be, and the extraordinary healer he has become. For a moment his hand rests reassuringly on the arm of a frightened elderly woman. He explains a surgical procedure to a man. He nods to people and keeps the line moving. He cautions the children to be careful of others in their play. He is both village elder and hospital chief. He is also keeping an eye on the staff, insisting on their impeccability in service—guiding his superbly honed institution of compassion with a glance, a word, a silent presence, a smile. As Gandhi once said, “My life is my message.” So Dr. V.’s blend of being and doing is his message. He continually seeks to be an instrument of imbuing the physical world with Living Spirit.

“India will enter the twenty-first century with 13 million of her people needlessly blind,” says Dr. V. “Intelligence and capability are not enough to solve our problems. We must have the joy of doing something beautiful. If you allow the divine force to flow through you, you will accomplish things far greater than you ever imagined.”

*Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*

Dr. V. and his staff perform 92,000 cataract surgeries a year; nearly 850,000 outpatient treatments. That's over three hundred surgeries a day, and 2,800 outpatients registered and seen each day. At the Seva Foundation, hundreds of members help support special people like Dr. V. and their noble work in under-privileged communities around the world. The Aravind Clinic has become a factory of caring for human beings. Their tall building of cement and steel and large plate-glass windows is a shining monument to Western technology. But it is also, like Dr. V. himself, a blend of being and doing.

From Ram Dass's experiences with Dr. V. and the Aravind family, he deepened his understanding of a basic tenet of the Seva Foundation—that one need not forgo doing for being, or being for doing. In Madurai he found himself immersed in a demonstration of the successful integration of these two aspects of life—actions involving the best skills and technology balanced with caring hearts rooted in a sweet spiritual presence that is embracing of all fellow souls. It is a great teaching.

*Seva works to transform lives by restoring sight in communities with little or no access to eye care. It has evolved into a highly effective organization, working with partners in over 20 countries to increase the capacity of local hospitals and develop sustainable eye care programs. Since 1978, Seva has provided eye care services to more than 44 million people in underserved communities around the world. Visit [www.seva.org](http://www.seva.org) for more information.*

*Stone Soup for the World: Life-Changing Stories of Everyday Heroes*



*From the Seva Foundation, Ram Dass deepened his understanding—one need not forgo doing for being, or being for doing. It is a great teaching.*

E SOUP  
E WORLD

ES OF EVERYDAY HEROES



LARNED

FIELD. AND EDWARD JAMES OLMOS

...are age sixty or over and low-eligible...  
...m of the National Senior Service Corps (Senior Corps) of the Corporation for  
...tional and Community Service, which also includes the Senior Companion  
...ogram. To find out where your local office is, call 800-424-8867, or visit  
[www.seniorcorps.org](http://www.seniorcorps.org).

## HELPING OTHERS TO SEE

Told by Ram Dass

If you are at a point in your life where you are ready to grow, to push yourself a little, to open your heart to a deeper compassion, drop in at the Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India. Offer yourself as a volunteer—for as long as you are comfortable. Even a week would work, as it did for me. Then watch with awe as Dr. V. or Thulasi, his second-in-command, finds a place just for you.

In your "free" time, don't miss 6:00 A.M. in the waiting room of the hospital, when Dr. V. walks about in the river of humanity. Hundreds of village folk stand in lines, waiting patiently for inexpensive, often free, outpatient eye care. In an adjoining wing, long lines of the blind and the near blind, guided by friends and relatives, await the ten-minute miracle of surgery that will give them back their sight.

Or join Dr. V.'s sister, a brilliant eye surgeon in her own right, as she, after six hours of surgery, leads a class of nurses in meditation and song.