

4. The Eyeglass Project

Dr. Modi has been engaged for the last ten days at Prasanthi Nilayam in the service of people who were in great distress, since they could not see —this is service that is really commendable and sacred. The eye is the mainspring of the body, as far as contact with outer nature is concerned. The eye is the medium (The netra is the sutra), as the saying goes. By this act of service, done selflessly, efficiently, and gladly for years, Modi has become a Yogi, much greater than many who claim that title. Sathya Sai Baba, Sathya Sai Speaks VI, Chapter 34, 148.

We cannot all be doctors, serving day-in-day-out like Dr. Modi. But we *can* do something to help unfortunate people with their eyesight and at the same time help the Earth. If one quarter of the U.S. population changed their glasses every five years, that would be well over ten million glasses rendered useless *each year*. Instead of throwing them out, thus contributing to the landfill problem, let's *reuse* them!

The World Health Organization estimates that one-fifth of the people in the world could have their eyesight improved with eyeglasses. However, in some parts of the world, glasses are unavailable, while in some other parts they can cost up to a month's wages.

In 1988, Lions Clubs International together with Lenscrafters started a program called *Give the Gift of Sight*. Since then, they have given over one million pairs of old eyeglasses to needy people around the world. Let's reduce waste and help others by contributing our old glasses! Call up a few opticians or optometrists —many already accept old eyeglasses and turn them in for reuse.

Your Sai Center could participate in this program on several levels. First, keep a box available in the Center for old glasses; when it fills up, take them to the nearest collection place. Next, Center devotees could ask their friends, relatives, and neighbours, on an informal level, whether they have old glasses to donate. Finally, if there is no active program for reusing glasses in your area, consider starting one.

Sai Story

An eye camp was organized at Puttaparthi and Swami Himself was supervising all the events. All the patients were standing in one line as they waited for the doctors. One enthusiastic lady asked Swami how come all the men and women were standing in one line, while they really should be in separate lines. "don't worry," Swami quipped, "they can't see, so it's okay to have just one line." from *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*.

Sai Tip

We have to cast our looks at sacred sights. We must visualize in everyone only the good and the godly. That is the purpose for which God has equipped us with eyes. He has not gifted them to us to observe and judge others, to follow people into the bazaar, to see unsightly films. **Sathya Sai Baba**, *Sathya Sai Speaks III*, Chapter 46, 263.

Facts about Eyeglasses

The Chinese used magnifying glasses in frames for reading as early as the 10th century. Marco Polo noted this custom in the court of Kublai Kahn in 1260. Transparent quartz was used for lenses at first, but glass was soon adopted in Europe when demand for glasses increased. The availability of glass lenses led to the invention of the microscope and telescope. Ben Franklin invented bifocals in 1784 and A. Fick made the first contact lenses about one hundred years later, in 1887.