



The Ganges River is the mother of India yet she is endangered by pollution. Meet Swamiji Muni Baba and other great Indian minds who refuse to let her die. A film festival favorite.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grades 9 – 12

Civics, Geography, World History

Civics - Standard 27. Understand how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities

- Understand the importance for individuals and society of commonly held personal responsibilities such as taking care of one's self, supporting one's family, accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, adhering to moral principles, considering the rights and interests of others, and behaving in a civil manner
- Understand the importance of dispositions that foster respect for individual worth and human dignity such as compassion and respect for the rights and choices of individuals

Geography - Standard 18. Understand global development and environmental issues

- Understand the possible impact that present conditions and patterns of consumption, production and population growth might have on the future spatial organization of Earth
- Understand how the interaction between physical and human systems affects current conditions on Earth
- Understand the concept of sustainable development and its effects in a variety of situations
- Understand why policies should be designed to guide the use and management of Earth's resources and to reflect multiple points of view

World History - Standard 44. Understand the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world

- Understand efforts to improve political and social conditions around the world
- Understand the causes and effects of population growth and urbanization
- Understand the importance or meaning of the natural environment for societies around the world
- Understand rates of economic development and the emergence of different economic systems around the globe
- Understand how specific countries have implemented social and cultural changes

Resource - [McREL Content Knowledge – Standards & Benchmarks](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ☞ What does philanthropy mean? Why do you think it is important for Charlie Annenberg Weingarten to discover the meaning of philanthropy and compassionate selfless giving? What does Swamiji Muni Baba teach him?
- ☞ What does renunciation mean? Why is this important to being a compassionate giving person?
- ☞ A guru is a person who “clears away the darkness”? Can anyone be a guru? Do you know a guru?
- ☞ Charlie says, “In the west, giving is seen as a material transaction – I give you this and in return I expect that” . Swamiji Muni Baba says, “The more you start expecting from others, desiring from others – you become the slave.” Explain these statements.
- ☞ What is happening to the River Ganges? Why does lawyer M.C. Mehta spend 20 years trying to fix the problems of the river instead of just “making money like other lawyers”?
- ☞ Charlie says early in the film, “Where there is a great need, there are great hearts and great minds that rise up to meet the challenge.” Explain how this is true of the people introduced in this film.
- ☞ What do you know?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Excerpts from interview at [explore.org](https://www.explore.org)

Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswati is a renowned spiritual leader who is the founder and chairman of the [India Heritage Research Foundation \(IHRF\)](https://www.indiaheritage.org).

What is the mission statement of your organization?

The basic mission of the IHRF is to bring food to the hungry, medicine to the sick, housing to the homeless, education to the illiterate, training to the unemployable, hope to the downtrodden, and light to the darkness.

Why did you get involved?

I have always felt that "Giving is Living," and in a wide variety of ways, I have always served humanity in whatever way I could. The formation of this foundation was just a way to consolidate the numerous projects and activities which I was already doing, or planning to do.

Why is it important to be a selfless person?

There is no other point to life. The goal of human existence is not to hoard for ourselves. The goal is to give. Indian culture and spirituality teaches us that there is nothing wrong with earning. The question is what you do with that which you've earned. It is said beautifully, “Earn with ten hands, no problem. But distribute the wealth with one thousand hands.” Selflessness is the very point of our existence - to learn how to see oneness and unity amongst all beings. If we are one with the starving child, if we are one with the sick old woman, if we are one with the struggling young girl, we will naturally extend both our hands to help.

What do you believe to be the biggest challenge facing our planet today?

Greed, selfishness, and illusion. The illusion of separateness is killing the planet. We think we are separate from each other. We think we are separate from the polluted rivers and oceans. We think we are separate from the deforested jungles. We are not. As they suffer, so we are suffering and so we will suffer in the future. The left hand can't cut off the right hand without bringing about great and severe suffering to the entire body.

