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### Compositions on Goddess Ganga Devi - A study.

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#### Abstract:

This research article delves into the kritis dedicated to Goddess Ganga Devi, exploring their cultural, spiritual, and musical significance within Carnatic music and Hindu devotional literature. Goddess Ganga, revered as a symbol of purity, forgiveness, and divine cleansing, occupies a unique place in Hindu worship, with her narratives appearing in various sacred texts, including the Rigveda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Puranas.

The article analyzes compositions by various composers such as Muthuswami Dikshitar, Adi Shankaracharya, Purandara Dasa, and Kakaturi Padmavathi Amma, highlighting their lyrical beauty, thematic elements, and their portrayal of Ganga as a nurturing, protective, and life-giving force. The kritis, composed in various ragas and talas, are celebrated for their intricate musical structures, poetic embellishments, and spiritual depth, offering a profound homage to the river goddess who embodies both nature's power and divine grace. Through this exploration, the article emphasizes the enduring legacy and devotional impact of these kritis on the cultural and spiritual landscape of Indian classical music.

**Keywords:** Gangadevi, kriti, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Purandaradasa, Kakaturi Padmavathi, Adi Shankaracharya, Ganga Stotram, Ganga Chalisa, Carnatic music, Hindu worship.

#### Introduction:

Goddess Ganga Devi, revered as the embodiment of purity and divinity, holds a unique and sacred place in Hindu mythology and worship, known as Ganga Mata or Mother Ganga. She is celebrated not only as a life-giving river but also as a compassionate deity capable of cleansing sins and granting salvation. Unlike many other goddesses, Ganga is not associated with fearsome or destructive aspects; instead, she embodies maternal grace, nurturing humanity and even other gods. Her presence is a constant reminder of the divine connection between the physical and spiritual worlds.



Ganga Devi is known by many names, including Jahnvi, Bhagirathi, and Vishnupadi, each reflecting her multifaceted nature and her deep-rooted significance in Hindu culture. Her earliest mentions in the Rigveda highlight her as the holiest of rivers, and her narratives continue to evolve through epic texts such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and various Puranas. The veneration of Ganga Devi extends beyond her physical form as a river, with numerous hymns, stotras, and kritis dedicated to her, celebrating her divine qualities and seeking her blessings. This research article delves into the rich tradition of kritis dedicated to Goddess Ganga, exploring the works of prominent composers like Muthuswami Dikshitar, Purandaradasa, Kakuturi Padmavathi Amma, and others. Through an analysis of these compositions, the article highlights the lyrical beauty, spiritual depth, and cultural significance of Ganga kritis in the Carnatic music tradition, emphasizing their role in perpetuating the devotion to this beloved river goddess.

### **Ganga Devi krithis:**

1. 'Gange maam pahi' by Muthuswami deekshithar, in Jhanjuti ragam,eka talam.
2. 'Ganga chalisa'.
3. 'Ganga stotram' (Adi Shankaracharya).
4. 'Sivuni shirasu paina' by Kakaturi padmavathi Amma in Punnaga varali ragam, Adi talam.
5. 'Ganga theera mane nammadu' by talampurandaradasu gaaru In kamboji ragam, Ata talam.

### **Analysis of several Ganga kriti's by various composers**

#### **Muttuswaami Dikshitar:**

Sri Muttuswaami Dikshitar is considered as one of the effulgent and ever present stars in the world of carnatic classical music. His compositions of which around 500 kritis are commonly known and noted for their elaborate and poetic descriptions of Hindu gods and temples and for capturing the essence of the raga forms through the vainika (veena) style that emphasizes gamakas. They are typically at a slower speed (chowka kala).

He is also known by his signature name of Guruguha which is also his mudra (and can be found in each of his songs) His compositions are widely sung and played in classical concerts of Carnatic music.

As a part of description of Hindu gods he composed a ganga devi kriti.

#### **1. "Gange mam pahi" Jhanjuti Ragam, Ekatalam.**

#### **Sudda sahithyam.**

#### **Pallavi**

Gange maam pahi girisa sira sthite  
Gambhira kaye gita vadya priye



## Samishti charanam

angaja tata mudree asi varana madhye  
akrura pujite akhila jananande  
sakala tirtha mule sadguru guha lile  
vara jahnu bale vyasa-adi krupale

## Intrinsic interpretation:

This kriti portrays Goddess Ganga as a divine and protective force, residing on Lord Shiva's head, revered by sages and associated with sacred rivers and spiritual wisdom. It emphasizes her importance in Hindu spirituality and her role as a benevolent deity who brings joy, grace, and protection to her devotees.

## Rhetorical beauties.

This Kriti is in the eighth (Sambodhana Prathama) Vibhakti  
Varuna and Asi are two rivers which merge with Ganga in Kashi, giving the city the name Varanasi.

sadguru guha lile : Ganga is one of the mothers of Guruguha .

akrura pujite : According to the Srimad-bhagavatam, Akrura spent many years in Kashi with the divine Syamantaka jewel and performed many good deeds.

geeta vadya priya : Ganga blessed Muthuswami Dikshitar with a Veena.

## Linguistics embellishments:

In this kriti by Muthuswami Dikshitar, we observe the use of rhyming patterns throughout the Pallavi and Samishti Charanam. This shows the meticulous use of rhyme schemes, enhancing the musicality and lyrical beauty of the composition.

Here is the detailed explanation of yati and prāsa in the given lines of the kriti:

## Pallavi

"Gange maam pahi girisa sira sthite Gambhira kaye geeta vadya priye"

### 1. Prāsa (Rhyme):

The second syllable in the words follows the dvitīya akṣara prāsa:

- Gange
- Girisa
- Gambhira
- Geeta



- The syllables Ga, Gi, Ga, Ge follow the prāsa rule by keeping a consistency in the initial sounds.

## **Anthya Prāsa (End Rhyme):**

The ending words:

Sthite and Priye Both lines end with "e", maintaining a consistent end rhyme.

## **2. Yati (Caesura or Pause):**

The pause is naturally observed after "Gange maam pahi" and before "girisa sira sthite," dividing the line meaningfully and melodically.

## **Samashti Charanam**

"Angaja tata mudēe asi varana madhye

Akrura pujite akhila jananande

Sakala tirtha mule sadguru guha lile

Vara jahnu bale vyasa-adi krupale"

## **1. Prāsa (Rhyme):**

- Dvītīya akṣara prāsa is maintained in this section too:
- Angaja
- Akrura
- Sakala
- Vara

- The consistent sound is maintained across the syllables, showing the adherence to prāsa niyamam.

## **2. Yati (Caesura or Pause):**

- Natural pauses are observed at places like:
- "Angaja tata mudēe asi | varana madhye"
- "Akrura pujite | akhila jananande"
- The breaks allow the lyrical flow and maintain the rhythmic pattern, aligning with the yati rule.

## **Anthya Prāsa (End Rhyme):**

The ending words of each line: Madhye, Nande, Lile, Krupale All lines end with "e", which provides a uniform end rhyme.

The anthya prāsa (end rhyme) in this kriti shows a consistent pattern where each line concludes with the "e" sound, maintaining the melodic flow and rhythmic integrity throughout the composition.

## **Compositional Situation:**

Muthuswami Dikshitar's "Gange mam pahi" Is a Kruthi dedicated to Ganga during his pilgrimage to Varanasi (kasi).



While he was inspired by the sacred river Ganga in Kasi, he composed this Kṛiti in the phrase of the goddess Ganga seeking her blessings and protection. The peace reflexes his deep spiritual connection and reverence for the holy river.

### **Adi Sankaracharya:**

Adi Shankaracharya, an 8th-century philosopher and theologian, is the foremost proponent of Advaita Vedanta, which teaches the non-duality of the soul and Brahman. He revitalized Hinduism by unifying diverse traditions, establishing four key monasteries, and composing influential texts. His teachings harmonized devotion with profound philosophical inquiry, leaving a lasting impact on Indian spirituality and culture.

### **Adi Shankaracharya's "Ganga stotram"**

#### **1. Devi Sureshwari Bhagavati Gange**

**Tribhuvana tarini tarala tarange**

**Shankara mauli vihara vibhange**

**Bhavatu bhavani saha sukhadayini.**

O Goddess Ganga, you are the supreme divine mother and the presiding deity of all the gods. Your swift, rippling waves save the three worlds from suffering. You reside in the matted locks of Lord Shiva. O Bhavani (consort of Shiva), may you bless us with happiness and prosperity.

#### **2. Bhagirathi sukhadayini matah**

**Tribhuvana tarini tarala tarange**

**Shankara mauli vihara vibhange**

**Bhavatu bhavani saha sukhadayini.**

O Mother Bhagirathi (another name for Ganga), who brings joy and comfort, your swift waves liberate the three worlds. Dwelling in the matted hair of Lord Shiva, may you, O Bhavani, grant us joy and well-being.

#### **3. Tava jalamamalam yena nipitam**

**Paramapadam khalu tena ghatitam**

**Matar Ganga tubhyam namah**

**Paramapadam khalu tena ghatitam.**

O Mother Ganga, those who drink your pure, sacred waters attain the supreme abode (moksha). I bow to you, O Ganga, for by drinking your waters, one truly reaches the highest state.

### **Compositional Situation:**

Adi Shankaracharya is traditionally credited with composing the Ganga Stotram (also known as Ganga Lahari), a devotional hymn in praise of the river Goddess Ganga. The hymn



extols the purity, sanctity, and divine blessings of the Ganges, often referred to as Ganga Devi in Hindu tradition. This stotram beautifully captures the reverence and spiritual significance attributed to the river, and it remains a popular prayer among devotees.

### **Another composition about goddess Ganga “Ganga chalisa”**

The Ganga Chalisa is attributed to a devotee of Goddess Ganga. It is said to have been composed in the hermitage of the sage Durvasa in the village of Kakara. This hymn is revered for its devotional content, praising the sacred river and seeking the blessings of Goddess Ganga.

**Kashi Nagri Veda Puraan,  
Jaya Jai Gange Bhagirathi Maat,  
Dharat Sadaa Yeh Kalimal Haat.  
ChauSath Teerath Hai Sab Paavan,  
Ganga Sarigam Jo Karat Bhakt Bhav Na.  
Gange Tva Darshan Suhaaye,  
Jah Vyaapak Sakal Kalyan Raa.  
Jah Samrat Jagdish Baida,  
Avataar Saara Jehi Jai Se.  
Jaha Sadaa Viraje Keshav Maay.  
Shiv Ganga Biraje Vedi,  
Koti Suri Surindra Sevedi.  
Ramchandra Surnaayak Baana,  
Dharat Mrig Purush Singarav Dhaar.**

The Ganga Chalisa is a 40-verse hymn in praise of Goddess Ganga, expressing devotion and reverence for the sacred river. However, it's important to note that, like many devotional texts, the exact authorship might vary in different traditions and regions.

### **Purandaradasa's ‘Ganga theera mane nammadu’**

Purandara Dasa (1484–1564), revered as the "**Father of Carnatic Music**," was a pioneering composer, saint, and a central figure in the Bhakti movement. Originally a wealthy merchant, he renounced his material life to dedicate himself to the worship of Lord Vishnu, composing thousands of devotional songs in Kannada that are celebrated for their lyrical beauty and spiritual depth. His works enriched the musical tradition but also promoted devotion, morality, and social equality, making him a transformative figure in Indian culture. He composed Ganga kriti in his own language Kannada. **‘Ganga theera mane nammadu’ Ragam Kamboji, Ata Talam.**

The kriti "Ganga teerada" composed by Purandara Dasa is in the raga Kambhoji and is set to a devotional theme that extols the significance of the river Ganga and its spiritual benefits.

### **Sudda Sahithyam:**

### **Pallavi**



**Ganga tIrada mane nammadu kashi  
bindum Adhavanalli iruvudu mane pancha**

## **Charanam 1**

**Avada kalada Anandara mane tavare talita nadiya mane  
Avaga kamalaja avataarisida mane e vedangaligella telaru mane pancha.**

## **Charanam 2**

**Citravalidalliya mane cinmayarupaantara mannenata  
maanakalokka ee mukti sayujyake kaadeyillaa mane pancha.**

## **Charanam 3**

**Hangillada mane hadiya bidade halu gangayyavaduu rakshashishuva mane  
muranganerulla mukti saadhanakinnu intha kangala punyakinnu kadeyilla mane pancha**

## **Charanam 4**

**Dhvaja vajrankita rekha shanka cakrada mane nija suvaryakhatoruva mane  
Gajarajagolidantha trijada aadac**

## **Charanam 5**

**Parama pavitra caritra teerthara mane parabrahma rathake sadanada mane  
paramaatmagi istattavanIva Varanaada purandara Vittalana mane pancha.**

## **Rhetorical beauties:**

The kriti "ganga teerada" composed by Purandara Dasa in the raga Kambhoji and set to Ata tala is rich in rhetorical beauty, which enhances its devotional appeal and poetic elegance.

Let's explore some of the key rhetorical features in this composition:

### **1. Repetition and Anaphora:**

Throughout the song, the word "mane" (meaning "house" or "abode") is repeated in each line of the Pallavi and Charanams. This repetition emphasizes the central theme of the abode of divine sanctity and spiritual refuge, which is compared to the banks of the Ganga and other sacred spaces.

### **2. Imagery:**

The kriti is abundant with vivid imagery. For example: "ganga teerada mane nammadu": The abode near the Ganga's banks symbolizes a place of purity and divine presence. "taavare talitada nadiya mane": The imagery of the river born from a lotus flower (referring to the pure and divine origins of the Ganga) creates a picture of celestial beauty and sanctity.



"gajaraja golidantha garuda vahananada": Describes Lord Vishnu's grandeur, riding Garuda and showing his royal and divine nature.

### 3. Metaphor:

The kriti uses metaphor to draw parallels between physical abodes and spiritual states: "nitya lokagala rakseesisuva mane": The abode that protects eternal worlds (lokas) is metaphorically representing a spiritual sanctuary that offers salvation and protection. "parama pavitra charitra teerttara mane": The pure and sacred abode represents a place where holy stories and acts reside, signifying a repository of divine history and sanctity.

### 4. Symbolism: Sacred Symbols:

The kriti references various symbols of spirituality, such as the "bindumaadhava," "dhvaja," "vajra," "shanka," and "cakra." These symbols represent divine presence and protection.

Sacred Geography: The association of Kashi, the banks of the Ganga, and other sacred spaces symbolize spiritual aspiration, salvation, and the journey towards moksha (liberation).

### 5. Antithesis:

The kriti uses contrasts to highlight the unique sanctity of the described abodes: "hangillada mane hadiya bidhade haalu gangiyavadu raksisuva mane": The abode that never lacks in sustenance and always protects, contrasting the ephemeral with the eternal.

### 6. Alliteration and Consonance:

Repetition of consonant sounds, as seen in phrases like "parama pavitra charitra," creates a rhythmic flow that enhances the musicality of the lyrics.

### 7. Personification:

Elements such as the Ganga, various abodes, and spiritual symbols are personified to create a sense of living divinity, actively participating in the lives of devotees: "citravalidalliya mane cinmaya roopada mane": Describes the abode as possessing a divine, consciousness-filled form, making the spiritual concept tangible and relatable.

### 8. Use of Vedic References:

The kriti includes references to Vedic and Puranic stories, such as "kamalaja avatarisida mane" (referring to Brahma emerging from a lotus), which connects the song to the broader cultural and spiritual heritage of Hinduism.

Overall, the rhetorical beauty of "gangaa tīrada" lies in its ability to weave complex spiritual concepts with lyrical grace, using repetition, metaphor, and vivid imagery to create a powerful devotional piece that celebrates the sanctity of divine abodes and the spiritual refuge they offer.

### Analysis of the prāsa, yati, and anthya prāsa of the kriti:

#### Pallavi

"Ganga tīrada mane nammadu kāshi

Bindumādhavanalli iruvudu mane pancha"

#### 1. Prāsa (Rhyme):





- Dvītīya akṣara prāsa: The second syllable in each line shows a consistent sound.
- Ganga
- Kashi
- Bindumādhava
- The consistent vowel sounds (Ga, Ka, Bi) maintain the rhyme.

## 2. Yati (Caesura or Pause):

- A natural pause is observed between phrases:
- "Ganga tīrada mane nammadu | kāshi"
- "Bindumādhavanalli | iruvudu mane pancha"

### Charanam 1

"Avada kalada Ānandara mane tavare talita nadiya mane  
Avaga kamalaja avataarisida mane e vedangaligella telaru mane pancha"

#### 1. Prāsa:

- The consistent use of similar syllables in the initial parts of the line:
- Avada, Ānandara, Avaga, Kamalaja.

#### 2. Yati:

- Natural pauses:
- "Avada kalada Ānandara mane | tavare talita nadiya mane"
- The pause separates the meaning, enhancing the rhythmic structure.

### Charanam 2

"Citralidalliya mane cinmayarupaantara mannenata  
Maanakalokka ee mukti sayujyake kaadeyillaa mane pancha."

#### 1. Prāsa:

- Dvītīya akṣara prāsa:
- Chitra, Chinmayarupa, Mana, Maana.

#### 2. Yati:

- Pauses:
- "Citralidalliya mane | cinmayarupaantara mannenata"

### Charanam 3

"Hangillada mane hadiya bidade halu gangayyavaduu rakshashishuva mane  
Muranganerulla mukti saadhanakinnu intha kangala punyakinnu kadeyilla mane pancha."



## 1. Prāsa:

- Rhyming words start with consistent syllables:
- Hangillada, Hadiya, Muranganerulla, Intha.

## 2. Yati:

- Pauses are placed meaningfully:
- "Hangillada mane hadiya bidade halu gangayyavaduu"

## Charanam 4

"Dhvaja vajrankita rekha shanka cakrada mane nija suvoryakhatoruva mane  
Gajarajagolidantha trijada adac"

## 1.Prāsa:

- The second syllables rhyme:
- Dhvaja, Vajrankita, Shanka, Nija.

## 2.Yati:

- The rhythmic structure is maintained by natural pauses:
- Dhvaja vajrankita rekha | shanka cakrada mane.

## Charanam 5

"Parama pavitra caritra teerthara mane parabrahma rathake sadanada mane  
"Paramaatmagi istattavanIva Varanaada purandara Vittalana mane pancha."

## 1. Prāsa:

- Consistent syllables:
- "Pa" rama, "pa"vitra, "Pa"rabrahma.

## 2.Yati:

- Structured pauses:
- "Parama pavitra caritra | teerthara mane parabrahma"

The kriti skillfully uses anthya prāsa with the repeated ending "mane," creating a rhythmic and thematic unity throughout the composition. This repetition enhances the lyrical flow, linking each verse to the idea of a sacred abode, and enriches the composition's poetic and spiritual essence.



### **Kakaturi padmavathi's "shuvuni sirasupai"**

Kakaturi Padmavathi (1911–1991) was a renowned Carnatic musician and vocalist, celebrated for her mastery in the classical music tradition of South India. Born in Andhra Pradesh, she was deeply immersed in music from a young age and went on to become one of the most respected figures in Carnatic music.

Padmavathi Amma was particularly known for her soulful renditions of Tyagaraja kritis and her expertise in rare ragas, which she performed with great devotion and precision. She received her training under prominent gurus and carved a niche for herself as a distinguished performer and teacher.

#### **Pallavi:**

**Sivuni sirasu pine cindhu ladedi ganga**

**Sri Vishnu padamuna velasina Ganga**

The Ganga, which flows from the holy feet of Lord Vishnu, is adorned with the sacred ash of Lord Shiva.

#### **Anu pallavi:**

**Gangamma puttinta Kalumopina Ganga**

**Kavula ghsntamula kulikeena Ganga.**

The Ganga, which has traversed from the home of Goddess Gauri, has mingled with the water of poetic compositions and the sounds of poetic rhythms.

#### **Charanam:1**

**Uravalla paravalla usuladukonuchu**

**Yerulalo vagulalo jaari poya Ganga**

**Nurugulato muthyala merugulatho kadhuluchu parugula tho Bhoomi Pai Pravahinche Ganga...**

The Ganga, flowing with its waves and currents, moves gracefully over the earth. It carries pearls and shines brightly, meandering through valleys and rivers.

#### **Charanam:2**

**Jabilli tho kalisi aataladedi Ganga**

**Jalarula inti adapadaChina Ganga**

**Jeevakotula mukhya pranamyna Ganga**

**Aushadhula poshinch Priyamaina Ganga**



The Ganga, which plays with the moon and is enjoyed by fishermen, is the very breath of life for all beings. It nourishes medicinal plants and provides sustenance to the world.

## **Charanam:3**

**Bhagirathuni muddu papayivai Ganga**

**Sagaruni muripinchu chakkani Ganga**

**Akasamuna nivasinchu akasa Ganga**

**Naglokamuna vasinchu pathala Ganga**

The Ganga, which was cherished by King Bhagiratha, delights the ocean with its beauty. It resides in the heavens, the Nagaloka (serpent world), and the Patala (netherworld), providing life and sustenance.

This song celebrates the divine river Ganga, extolling its sacred origins, its nourishing and life-giving properties, and its revered status across various realms.

## **Rhetorical beauties:**

Kākatūri Padmavati Amma's kriti in the rāga Punnāgavarāli exquisitely demonstrates the artistry of literary and musical techniques that heighten its devotional impact. The kriti's rhetorical beauty is deeply intertwined with its melodic structure and lyrical composition:

### **1. End Rhyme (Antyaprāsa):**

The repetitive use of the word "Ganga" at the end of each line anchors the song, creating a resonant emphasis on the deity. This consistent rhyme reinforces the focus on Goddess Ganga, creating a rhythmic and meditative experience for the listener.

### **2. Alliteration and Internal Rhyme in the Pallavi:**

The Pallavi employs alliteration with words such as (Shivuni), (Shirasu), and (Sri Vishnu). This choice of words creates a melodic cadence that enhances the song's devotional tone, mirroring the divine qualities of Ganga with a soothing, rhythmic flow.

### **3. Anupallavi:**

In the Anupallavi, the lines (Kaalū Mopina Ganga) and (Kavula Ghantamula Kulikina Ganga) employ alliteration and internal rhyme to weave a harmonious texture. The repeated sounds evoke a sense of continuous, graceful movement, reflecting the divine flow of the Ganga.

### **4. First Charanam:**

The first Charanam features rhythmic patterns with words like (Uravalla), (Paravalla), and (Erulalo), along with (Nurugulato), (Merugulato), and (Parugulato). These choices not only provide a lyrical rhythm but also evoke a vivid imagery of the Ganga's sparkling, flowing waters, enhancing the visual and emotional appeal of the song.



## 5. Second Charanam:

The second Charanam's use of rhyming elements such as (Jābillitho), (Jālarula), and (Jeevakotula) adds a melodic continuity. The alliteration and rhyme create a musical quality that underscores the Ganga's omnipresence and divine significance, enriching the listener's spiritual connection.

## 6. Final Charanam:

The final Charanam employs a sophisticated rhyme scheme with words like “మరిపించు” (Muripinchu), “నివసించు” (Nivasinchu), and “వసించు” (Vasinchu). This choice of rhymes enhances the song's melodic flow, creating a sense of completeness and divine serenity as it celebrates Ganga's eternal presence.

These rhetorical devices are not merely decorative but serve to deepen the emotional and devotional experience of the kriti, beautifully aligning with the sacred essence of Goddess Ganga. The thoughtful integration of rhyme, alliteration, and imagery creates a compelling and spiritually uplifting piece that resonates with both the heart and mind.

## Conclusion:

These kritis are dedicated to goddess Ganga and are significant in Karnataka's music tradition due to their spiritual, cultural and devotional dimensions. Ganga is considered one of the holiest rivers in Hinduism, symbolized in purity, sanctity and its divinity. Many composers had personal devotional relationships with Ganga and expressed their individual experiences and emotions through their compositions.

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