

Environment, Devotion, and Global Peace as Depicted in the Gangalahari

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Abstract- In the verses of *Gangalahari*, the Ganga is presented not merely as a sacred river but as a source of environmental power, divine compassion, and global well-being. This study analyzes the interrelationship between environment, devotion, and global peace based on selected verses from *Gangalahari*. Water is portrayed as the foundation of life, a symbol of divine grace, and a pathway to collective peace. In the Indian spiritual tradition, rivers—especially the Ganga—are not regarded merely as geographical entities; rather, they are revered as living spiritual and ecological forces. In *Gangalahari*, composed by Pandit Jagannatha, the Ganga is depicted as a destroyer of sins, a giver of life, and a benevolent force dedicated to the welfare of the world. This poetic work is not only a devotional hymn but also a profound reflection of the relationship between humanity and nature.

Ecology, Devotion, and Global Peace as Presented in *Gangalahari*

In the verses such as “*te salilamashivam naḥ śamayatu*” and “*samṛddham saubhāgyam sakalavasudhāyāḥ*”, water is regarded as the fundamental basis of the prosperity of the entire Earth. The water of the Ganga is described as “*sudhasaundaryam*” (nectar-like beauty), thereby presenting it as a life-sustaining and balancing force. Here, water is not treated merely as a resource, but as the very foundation of all living beings and culture. Through expressions such as “*maheśvaryam līlājanitajagataḥ*” and “*śrutinām sarvasvam*”, God is portrayed as the creator of the universe and the essence of the Vedas. Devotion here does not imply narrow religiosity, but rather an experience of divine compassion pervading nature. The Ganga is depicted not merely as a river but as a visible manifestation of divine compassion. She disseminates energy, movement, and purity throughout the world. Her

flowing waves are not merely physical currents but an ecological force that destroys sorrow, sin, and fear.

The poet expresses a sense of humility and surrender through the Ganga’s refuge. The phrase “*nirādhāro hā rodimi kathaya keśām iha puraḥ*” symbolizes humanity’s complete dependence on nature. Devotion here does not only refer to surrender to God, but also includes ethical responsibility, sensitivity, and humility toward nature.

Phrases such as “*aśivam naḥ śamayatu*” and “*durita-bhaya-bhaṅgāya bhavatām*” depict the Ganga as a force that destroys global unrest, fear, and violence. These verses suggest that the exploitation and disrespect of nature are the root causes of global instability, while respect, conservation, and a spiritual outlook toward nature can lead to lasting peace. Thus, *Gangalahari* establishes a profound and inseparable connection between environmental conservation, spiritual devotion, and global peace.

The Ganga becomes a symbol of universal welfare; if her flow is obstructed, all of humanity becomes “unsupported” and vulnerable. The verses convey that the insult and exploitation of nature, along with human arrogance, are the primary causes of global unrest, whereas respect for nature, its protection, and a spiritual vision can become the foundation of true peace.

The water of the Ganga is regarded as a divine power that awakens even the dormant consciousness of those who have strayed from righteous deeds and dispels the darkness of laziness and ignorance like moonlight. Here, water is not merely a means of physical purification but also of mental and moral purification. The term “*sakala-surasaṁsevyasalilā*” portrays the Ganga as a sacred river served even by the gods and universally revered. Through “*mamāntaḥ santāpaṁ trividham api pāpaṁ*”

ca haratām”, a prayer is made for the removal of the threefold sufferings physical, divine, and spiritual as well as sins.

This idea highlights in modern environmental ethics the deep interconnection between inner well-being and natural resources. The sanctity of the Ganga’s banks is associated with renunciation and spiritual bliss. The description of people who abandon great kingdoms and material wealth to reside on the banks of the Ganga surrounded by her flowing waves suggests that closeness to nature is far superior to material power and luxury. Describing the water of the Ganga as sweeter than nectar, the poet states that those who drink it with deep devotion experience such supreme bliss that even liberation (*mokṣa*) appears insignificant in comparison.

The poetic depiction of queens of kings who bathe in the Ganga during the early morning hours is also extremely captivating. The purity of the Ganga water imparts a divine radiance to their beauty, and even celestial deer, attracted by its fragrance, enter the Nandanavana fearlessly. In this imagery, humans, animals, and the divine realm appear interconnected through a single ecological flow. The Ganga becomes a source of peace, purity, and welfare for all living beings.

Even the mere remembrance of the Ganga brings peace to the mind, and sins along with worldly sufferings are destroyed instantly. This idea highlights that nature is not merely a physical resource but also a powerful source of mental and moral well-being. By portraying the banks of the Ganga as a refuge that removes the sorrow of birth and death, the text presents an environmental foundation for mental equanimity, contentment, and inner stability—qualities essential for global peace.

That spiritual attainment which is considered rare even through Vedic study, austerity, or great charity becomes easily accessible to ordinary people through the Ganga. Here, devotion does not refer to narrow religious rituals but rather to a universal spiritual path open to all humanity, which becomes a fundamental condition for global peace. The greatness of the Ganga is described in such a way that even a mere sight of her removes the fear of worldly existence, and even Lord Shiva carries her upon his head. This symbolizes the supreme dignity and significance of nature. The Ganga continuously washes away the sins of all sections of society. This

reflects the ideals of human equality, inclusive justice, and universal humanism. In *Gangalahari*, the Ganga is extensively portrayed as the natural purity of the environment, the highest compassionate expression of devotion, and the universal foundation of global peace.

The Ganga is expressed as “*svabhāva-śucchānām sahaja-śīṣirāṇām ayam apām apārah*”, indicating that her purity and clarity are not the result of any artificial means but her inherent nature. This idea strengthens environmental awareness that nature itself provides balance, coolness, and health. Human duty is not to destroy it but to preserve and enhance it.

The sons of Sagara are still described as singing the praises of the Ganga. This depiction emphasizes that humanity’s mythological, historical, and ethical relationship with nature is not merely a memory of the past but an eternal inspiration continuously alive in human consciousness. The Ganga is described as the repository of dharma, the supreme refuge among sacred places, the source of wisdom, and the foundation of prosperity. Here, devotion is not limited to individual liberation but expands into collective ethics, social harmony, and universal welfare.

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are all associated with the Ganga, indicating that nature lies at the center of the entire divine order. The Ganga flows from the matted locks of Śiva, washes the feet of Viṣṇu, and grants fearless meditation to Brahmā. Symbolically, this represents that when nature is respected and preserved, harmony and balance are established in the entire cosmic order. The form of the Ganga is depicted as a profoundly compassionate environmental force, the highest expression of devotional surrender, and the universal foundation of global peace. She appears not merely as a sacred river but as a maternal remedy for suffering humanity, a moral refuge, and a symbol of collective liberation. The poet considers himself like a helpless, sinful, and motionless child and takes refuge in Mother Ganga. With the descent of the Ganga on Earth, the turmoil of Yamaloka subsides and the messengers of Yama become inactive. Symbolically, this indicates that where compassion, purity, and the life-giving flow of nature are present, fear of death, violence, and unrest naturally diminish. The entire universe is poetically described as playing within the waves of the Ganga like a small fruit. The stream flowing from the matted hair of Shiva appears here as

the central axis of cosmic order, sustaining and nurturing all creation. All other sacred rivers and pilgrimage sites appear humbled before the Ganga, and she becomes the ultimate refuge for those burdened by sin. The poet humbly admits his inability to adequately praise the compassion of the Ganga. This represents the highest form of devotion, in which ego is completely dissolved, leaving only humility and surrender. The poet expresses his long-standing faith and hope in the Ganga and states that he has now taken refuge in her to realize that hope. Even after acknowledging his faults, crooked tendencies, and false speech, he still seeks liberation and welfare through the compassionate vision of Mother Ganga. Here, devotion does not take a punitive form; rather, it assumes a corrective, compassionate, and transformative nature. This perspective conveys a message that leads humanity from despair to hope, from impurity to purification, and from unrest to global peace.

The form of the Ganga is portrayed with great sensitivity as living ecological consciousness, the highest expression of compassionate devotion, and the moral foundation of global peace. According to the poet, human eyes and ears attain true meaning only when they experience the divine beauty of the Ganga and the enchanting play of her waves; otherwise, even with functional senses, a person remains spiritually impoverished. Here, nature is presented not merely as an object of perception but as an experiential reality that purifies, enriches, and elevates human consciousness. Regions deprived of the presence of the Ganga are described as inauspicious. This idea emphasizes that where the pure, life-giving, and compassionate presence of nature is absent, sin, violence, and unrest tend to grow naturally. Through her divine play, the Ganga removes all impurities and faults of humanity. This concept conveys a fundamental message of global peace: the degradation of the environment and the decline of human values are deeply interconnected. The poet describes the divine power of the Ganga's waves, stating that they even purify the air and cleanse the entire three worlds. By the grace of the Ganga, even Lord Jagannath rests peacefully without fear. This suggests that the entire cosmic order and social balance depend upon the compassionate and life-sustaining power of nature.

When nature remains balanced and protected, peace, security, and prosperity flow into human life.

In this context, the tone of devotion is deeply emotional and heartfelt. The poet acknowledges that sins, weaknesses, and flaws are an inherent part of human nature and are extremely difficult to overcome completely. Therefore, he seeks refuge in the infinite compassion of the Ganga. This devotion is grounded in self-acceptance, humility, and self-purification.

The poet further states that if such selfless, universal compassion embodied by the Ganga were to abandon humanity, then all three worlds would lose their foundation of trust, refuge, and moral stability. In other words, a world devoid of compassion, nature, and spirituality becomes completely unsupported and directionless. The Ganga is not just a natural river but a divine flow of compassion descended through the sacred union of Śiva and Śakti, binding humanity, society, and the entire cosmos into a principle of harmony. The waves of the Ganga are described as ornaments scattered upon Lord Shiva's head by the tender hands of Goddess Pārvatī. This imagery presents nature as gentle, beautiful, and a source of peace.

The peace arising from the sacred confluence of Shiva, Shakti, and Ganga permeates the entire world. This devotion is not motivated by status, self-interest, or desire for rewards, but is a form of deep spiritual reverence toward nature. Such selfless devotion represents the essential human values required for global peace.

By describing the sacred soil of the Ganga as radiant like the sun, it is presented as an element that dispels the darkness of human destiny. Here, environmental elements such as water and soil convey a message of light, hope, and equality in human life. This idea is deeply connected with social justice, human dignity, and the spirit of equality. Addressing the trees on the banks of the Ganga as friends, it is said that their fragrance and beauty can gradually purify even a person afflicted by moral impurities. Thus, nature is portrayed as a silent preacher and moral teacher. The Ganga is not merely a river here, but a maternal force of compassion that unites ecology, devotion, and

global peace into a single integrated principle. The beauty of the Ganga, her soil, trees, and flowing waves morally refine human beings and establish harmony, compassion, and equality in society. Selfless devotion, respect for nature, and the awakening of human values together form a strong foundation for global peace. Accepting nature as Mother and living in coexistence with her is presented as the highest path for humanity and world peace. In *Gangalahari*, the form of the Ganga reaches its fullest expression as the divine purity of the environment, the gentle and compassionate culmination of devotion, and the aesthetic spiritual foundation of global peace. Here, Mother Ganga is not merely a natural river but a white, cool, and nectar-like conscious force. Even mere contemplation of her is believed to remove human sorrow, fear, and humiliation. Through imagery such as her radiance resembling the autumn full moon, her hands in varada (boon-giving) and abhaya (fear-dispelling) mudras, and her association with the crocodile mount, the Ganga presents an ideal environmental concept in which purity, protection, and reassurance are simultaneously embodied.

Here, devotion is portrayed as fearless, inclusive, and filled with compassion toward all living beings. Thus, in *Gangalahari*, the Ganga emerges as a unified and universal consciousness of ecological balance, spiritual upliftment, human compassion, and global peace. In the context of global peace, the waves of the Ganga bring tranquility to the soul; they cool the heat of suffering, violence, and imbalance at individual, social, and global levels. This clearly demonstrates that nature, spirituality, and human well-being are inseparably connected. Where nature is pure and balanced, peace, prosperity, and mutual trust naturally develop in society.

Conclusion

The conservation of the Ganga is not merely the protection of a river; it also strengthens the purification of human consciousness, the nurturing of social harmony, and the foundations of world peace.

In the modern context, its essence can be summarized as follows: pure nature, compassionate

spirituality, and aesthetic human values form the fundamental basis of sustainable global peace.

In *Gangalahari*, the Ganga is depicted as a divine, cooling, and compassionate consciousness that unites ecology, devotion, and global peace into a single thread. Contemplation of the Ganga calms human fear, sorrow, and unrest, while her flowing waves bring relief to social and global tensions. Thus, the Ganga emerges not merely as a sacred river but as an eternal inspiration for peace, compassion, morality, and ecological balance for all humanity.

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