



India in Hindu eschatology: A survey on *kerala bhakti* literature

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ABSTRACT

Background: This Research article analyzes the eschatological aspects of *Kerala's Bhakti* literature to elucidate how devotional texts reflect India's spiritual and political self-perception. This study is situated within the expansive domain of Hindu historical eschatology, examining the ways in which *Bhakti* poets like Ezhuthachan, Poonthanam Namboodiri, and Melpathur Bhattathiri reinterpreted scriptural concepts of *Kaliyuga*, moral decline, and salvation into vernacular forms that promote cultural renewal. **Methods:** The research utilizes a qualitative, interpretive methodology rooted in Gadamerian hermeneutic textual analysis. The study employs three analytical stages—textual exegesis, contextual interpretation, and conceptual synthesis—to identify key eschatological motifs, compare their manifestations across selected texts, and position them within Hindu philosophical cosmology and contemporary Indian political discourse. **Findings:** Comparative insights are also drawn between Hindu and Abrahamic ideas of apocalypse to elucidate the unique cyclical temporality and moral focus of Hindu eschatology. The findings indicate that *Kerala's Bhakti* corpus reconceptualizes *Kaliyuga* not only as a mythical era of deterioration but also as a moral state wherein devotion emerges as the most straightforward and attainable route to redemption. **Conclusion:** These works further sanctify Bharath (India) as a redemptive geography—an eschatological realm where divine grace and moral regeneration converge. *Bhakti* literature serves as theology, moral philosophy, and proto-political discourse by connecting spiritual rebirth to India's historical resilience. The study's methodological constraint is its dependence on a restricted textual corpus, primarily *Malayalam Bhakti* works; yet, it lays the groundwork for further comparative research among different regional traditions. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The article's originality is in the development of a conceptual model of Hindu historical eschatology, connecting devotional literature with political imagination, and illustrating how spiritual writings persist in influencing India's ethical and cultural modernity.

KEYWORDS: *bhakti* literature; hindu eschatology; historical eschatology; *kaliyuga*; politics.

1. Introduction

Religious literature exerts a significant impact on society and culture. This influence extends beyond personal relationships to political interactions. The purpose of religious writing is to disseminate and foretell the ethics and ideas that promote the betterment of individuals and society. Religious and literary works frequently encompass themes and concepts that remain pertinent throughout extended durations. The literary works produced in earlier periods have gained significant relevance due to their prophetic qualities. Religious literature, distinct from sacred scriptures, promotes similar themes and

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tenets using more accessible and eloquent language, and has consistently been integral to the religious life of society. The discussion of the *Bhakti* tradition and its resultant literature possesses socio-cultural and political significance. The *Bhakti* tradition, recognized as a socio-cultural movement through literary and cultural endeavors, confronted the socio-cultural and political inequities, oppressions, and social injustices of its day. The major source or weapon of the reformation was the religious literature that was written as part of this movement. When society underwent moral and ethical deterioration in different spheres, the *Bhakti* literature enlightened society. This literature had independence in style and expression, while its fundamental philosophy, themes, and concepts were derived from sacred religious texts. The *Bhakti* movement is seen as a religious yet accessible way that guided the laity to the fundamental principles of religious ideals and philosophy. Hence, the *Bhakti* movement is also considered a religious but popular road that guided the layman to the essential ideas of religious ideals and philosophy. Hence, the *Bhakti* tradition exerted a bigger influence on individuals, religion, and society.

Since the relevance of *Bhakti* tradition and the associated literature is multifaceted, this paper attempts to find the prophetic tone of *Bhakti* literature concerning contemporary politics; as I stated earlier, the major themes and concepts inherent in these literary works in common primarily sourced from holy scriptures, but articulated and presented in these works mainly addressed laymen and their upliftment, through religious ethos and morals. Every Holy Scripture is loud about the apocalyptic times and the advice regarding how to survive during such an era. Currently, an academic branch of research dives into this, exploring how apocalyptic times have been characterised or described in the holy texts. Eschatology is a religious discourse that analyzes notions of the final times. Usually, scholarly enquiries related to eschatology are more inclined towards the Abrahamic religions since Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are clearly loud and expressive of the conceptions of final times (Landes, 2025). However, it does not confine the scope of eschatology to other religions, such as Hinduism. The holy books of Hinduism also comprise of concepts regarding end times that are different from those of Abrahamic religions. Eschatology is an important source of reconstructing history because many of the events mentioned in the scriptures have historical and scientific evidence and relevance. Other than that, many of the events and conceptions that contain oracular elements have been realised in the world, which again highlights the relevance of eschatology. Clearly, bifurcating mythological eschatology and historical eschatology and examining history in reference to historical eschatology can reveal greater insights regarding society and culture. Effectively understanding and applying eschatology for academic reasons can also strengthen specific viewpoints from the past and for the future. In that sense, "biblical and biblically influenced eschatologies are historical and geared toward the historical future" (Landes, 2025).

How biblical and eschatological historicity gave birth to a wide political discourse that is based on religious scriptures, and eschatology illustrates the significance and usefulness of this academic discipline. Eschatology may give and disclose the internal logic of different religions and how that religious logic has formed each religion's perspective and interventions in society and culture (Walls, 2007). As indicated earlier, eschatology is a way of comprehending and foreseeing history, its influence just not theoretical in character. Rather, it has practical and political ramifications (Walls, 2007). There are reports and research underlining that the foreign policies of Western countries, America and Israel are heavily dependent on fundamentalist Christian eschatology (Walls, 2007). Since eschatology is demonstrated to be a key academic, political and theological discourse it is vital to examine important religious scriptures and the works of literature which relies on holy religious scriptures to understand and unearth the political implication they put forward.

Hindu eschatology, a rich and complex domain within the broader Indian philosophical tradition, has undergone significant conceptual developments, moving beyond classical interpretations of cyclical time and cosmic dissolution to encompass more nuanced understandings of individual and collective salvation (Urban, 2012). This evolution

indicates a continual intellectual engagement with the nature of existence, the ultimate reality, and the telos of human endeavor, frequently linking old cosmological frameworks with contemporary philosophical discourse (Ganguly, 2023). Indeed, while the Vedic idea of "That One" and the Upanishadic Brahman constitute basic understandings of the Ultimate, later iterations, including non-theistic and monotheistic theologies, further highlight the varied conceptions of divine reality within Hinduism (Bilimoria, 2024). These various concepts intrinsically impact the eschatological frameworks, influencing thoughts on liberation (*moksha*), the role of individual agency, and the ultimate fate of the cosmos (Bilimoria, 2024). The discourse around eschatology in Hinduism, therefore, demands a thorough analysis of its metaphysical roots, notably concerning the nature of the divine and its relationship to individual souls and the cosmos. This study typically leads to intricate discussions addressing the interplay between individual liberation (*moksha*) and universal dissolution (*pralaya*), as well as the potential for social salvation (*sarvamukti*) as expressed in some philosophical schools (Maharaj, 2020). This investigation into Hindu eschatology must therefore scrutinize not only the philosophical roots of cyclical time and cosmic renewal but also the deep theological discussions concerning the existence of a unique divine entity versus a plurality of divine manifestations (Bilimoria, 2024). Scholarly engagement with Hindu eschatology—the study of ultimate time, cosmic disintegration, and renewal—has historically been confined to textual or mythical analysis. Classical writings find eschatological aspects within *Purānic* cycles, particularly the *Kali Yuga* and the advent of *Kalkī*, the final incarnation of *Viṣṇu* (Donigar, 1993; Milner, 1993). These cyclical views of time, unlike the linear teleologies of Abrahamic religions, suggest recurring decline and rebirth. Yet, as some current scholars notice, these cosmological frameworks have increasingly been recast in modern Indian political and cultural discourse as tales of national rebirth and civilizational destiny (Basu, 2020; Saleem, 2023).

Recent studies have strayed from simply theological readings to study how eschatological symbolism becomes politically active. Basu (2020) situates Hindutva's notion of sovereignty inside what he calls a "political monotheism," where legendary temporality and holy destiny legitimate nationalist politics. Similarly, Sarkar (2021) claim that Hindu nationalist rhetoric sacralizes politics by invoking apocalyptic imaginaries—portraying India's moral collapse under Kali Yuga and its salvation through a pure, reborn nation. Such reappropriations change eschatology into a political theology of restoration. Parallel to these developments, historians of *Bhakti* literature have explored its devotional humanism to understand its relevance in current identity politics.

Historically, *Bhakti* poets such as Kabir, Tukaram, and Mirabai defined universal spiritual equality that transcended caste, ritual, and sectarian barriers (Hawley, 2015). Modern reinterpretations of *Bhakti*, however, often bounce between pluralist and nationalist readings. While some consider *Bhakti* as a premodern articulation of subaltern resistance and inter-religious communication, others trace its instrumentalization in nationalist and cultural revivalist programs that connect spiritual devotion with loyalty to the imagined Hindu country (Nanda, 2012). Eschatological readings of *Bhakti* recontextualize this religious corpus within larger narratives of cultural renewal. Dixit (2024), for instance, understands Hindu apocalypse motifs—sacrifice, dissolution, and rebirth—as symbolic frameworks through which Indian politics envisions itself as a rite of national renewal. The *Bhakti* emphasis on inward purity and divine immanence can thus be interpreted alongside the eschatological metaphor of cosmic restoration, wherein India becomes both the site and subject of salvation. Such ties explain how the language of spiritual transcendence in *Bhakti* discourse resonates with modern appeals for moral cleansing and political regeneration in Hindutva ideology.

Furthermore, the cultural mediation of these themes through popular media—from devotional television serials to current movie portrayals such as *Kalki 2898 AD*—demonstrates how eschatological motifs move into mass imagination. The figure of *Kalkī* and the discourse of *Kali Yuga* decline are commonly deployed to understand corruption, globalization, or cultural loss, thereby naturalizing a cyclical logic of destruction and rebirth that corresponds with nationalist teleologies. In this sense, Hindu eschatology does not stay

a legendary residue but becomes an active cultural script defining ideas of crisis and renewal. Together, these works indicate that Hindu eschatological imagination—long based in cyclical cosmology—has been refashioned into a political language of destiny in contemporary India. The junction of *Bhakti*'s devotional universalism with the nationalist appropriation of eschatological tropes emphasizes a paradox; while *Bhakti* historically eliminates boundaries through spiritual egalitarianism, its modern recuperation often re-inscribes cultural exclusivism. Reviewing this literature reveals how eschatology functions not only as mythic futurism but as a dynamic hermeneutic through which India's political present is read, fought, and sanctified.

2. Methods

The methodology chosen in this study is essentially qualitative and interpretative, focusing on a rigorous textual examination of Kerala's *Bhakti* literature within the broader context of Hindu eschatology. The paper studies selected devotional texts—such as *Ezhuthachan's Harināmakīrthanam*, *Poonthanam's Jñānappāna*, and *Melpathur Bhattathiri's Nārāyaṇīyam*—to discover their thematic, philosophical, and prophetic characteristics. Through a hermeneutical method, the study situates these works in their historical and socio-cultural contexts, demonstrating how they address the issues of *Kaliyuga* and articulate a vision of salvation accessible to the common people. Comparative insights are also derived by juxtaposing Hindu eschatological notions with those of Abrahamic faiths, so emphasizing both the distinctiveness and the political implications of Hindu eschatology. Instead of applying quantitative tools, the approach is conceptual and analytical, revealing how religious literature operates as both a moral guide and a socio-political discourse. In doing so, the study mixes historical contextualization, literary interpretation, and philosophical reflection to explore the linkages between devotion, eschatology, and politics.

The interpretative design of this study unfolds through three interrelated stages: textual exegesis, contextual interpretation, and conceptual synthesis. The first stage, textual exegesis, entails a close reading of main *Bhakti* texts—*Harināmakīrthanam*, *Nārāyaṇīyam*, and *Jñānappāna*—to identify their eschatological elements, particularly the imagery of *Kaliyuga*, salvation via divine memory, and moral regeneration. The second stage, contextual interpretation, situates these themes within the socio-cultural and historical setting of early modern Kerala, explaining how *Bhakti* discourse responded to ethical deterioration and societal fragmentation. This stage also investigates the resonance of these writings with the broader philosophical framework of Hindu eschatology, specifically its reconfiguration of cyclical temporality and divine intervention. The third stage, conceptual synthesis, blends textual insights with contemporary political hermeneutics, building an interpretive model that relates *Bhakti* eschatology to India's current cultural and geopolitical self-conception. Conceptually, the study develops a hermeneutic concept of "historical eschatology" within Hindu thinking.

This approach defines *Bhakti* literature as mediating between mythological cosmology and historical consciousness—where devotional ethics operate as vehicles of cultural and political regeneration. The model posits three analytic axes, (a) the temporal, which reads *Kaliyuga* as an ongoing moral condition rather than a chronological epoch; (b) the spatial, which foregrounds Bharath as a sacred geography of redemption; and (c) the political-theological, which examines how eschatological imagination informs collective identity and civic virtue in modern India. By linking literary devotion with political symbolism, this conceptual framework elucidates how Kerala's *Bhakti* corpus encodes a view of India as both an eschatological realm and a moral society, uniting the transcendental and the temporal.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Bhakti movement and literature*

Bhakti, a significant spiritual path originating from the Indian subcontinent, represents a unique form of mysticism characterized by intense devotion and unconditional love towards a personal deity. This path emphasizes a relational engagement with the divine, distinguishing it from impersonal, unitive forms of mysticism prevalent in some other traditions (Sheridan, 1981). Instead, *bhakti* fosters a profound connection, often articulated through emotional and affective responses to the divine reality (Barua, 2020). This devotional approach often involves a theological dialectic where the divine is perceived as transcendent and immanently present, accessible through human sensitivities and emotions (Barua, 2020). This spiritual discipline, often simplified as "Hindu devotion" or "divine love," encompasses a much broader philosophical role within Indian worldviews, transcending simplistic characterizations (Singh, 1991). Its intricate methodologies, rooted in Vedic texts and diverse guru-based lineages, underscore a sophisticated approach to spiritual realization that often intertwines with advaitic self-knowledge and ritual practices (Barua & Khalid, 2020). This integration highlights the syncretic nature of Indian spirituality, where the emotional fervor of *bhakti* complements the intellectual rigor of philosophical inquiry (Lele, 1980). This multifaceted tradition, spanning over twelve centuries, has profoundly shaped the historical and cultural landscape of India, leaving indelible impressions on religious, political, and social movements (Biswal, 2021). It has become one of the most recognizable and widely practiced forms of devotion both within and outside of India, celebrated for its emphasis on developing an intimate and sustained love for the divine (Chilcott, 2016).

The *Bhakti* movement, a significant socio-religious reformation that swept across the Indian subcontinent from the 8th to the 18th centuries, emphasized the path of devotion (*bhakti*) as the primary means to attain spiritual liberation and communion with the divine. This widespread phenomenon transcended traditional caste, creed, and gender barriers, offering a direct and intimate relationship with the chosen deity, often in highly personalized and emotive forms (Chilcott, 2016). The devotional literature emerging from these traditions frequently explores a theological dichotomy between divine transcendence and immanence, portraying the divine as both majestically distant and intimately accessible through human emotions and sensibilities (Barua, 2020). This movement, therefore, shifted focus from ritualistic observances and stringent asceticism to an internalized and often ecstatic experience of the divine (Barua, 2020). Spanning over twelve centuries, the *Bhakti* movement left indelible impressions on the cultural and historical landscape of India, profoundly influencing its religious, social, and political spheres (Biswal, 2021). Its core tenets, which emphasized egalitarianism and personal devotion, provided a powerful counter-narrative to the prevailing hierarchical structures, fostering a sense of spiritual democracy among adherents (Lele, 1980). At its heart, the *Bhakti* movement championed a spiritual love that transcended conventional human affection, focusing intensely on the divine as the ultimate object of devotion (Puri, 2011).

Bhakti literature emerged as a groundbreaking form of devotional writing that spanned regional languages across the Indian subcontinent, serving as both a spiritual medium and a platform for social critique. Rooted in devotional fervor, this literature—encompassing hymns, poetry, songs, and hagiographies—celebrates an intimate, personal relationship with the divine, transcending caste, gender, and ritualistic boundaries that traditionally governed religious life (Oza, 2020). It burgeoned in South India through Tamil Alvars and Nayanars between the 6th and 9th centuries, whose emotional and collective expressions of love towards deities in local tongues laid the foundation for later developments across North India (Hawley, 2015). As the movement propagated northwards, illustrious poet-saints such as *Kabīr*, *Tulsīdās*, *Mirābāī*, and *Nānak* democratized spirituality by crafting verses in vernacular. This literary tradition was revolutionary in its challenge to Brahminical orthodoxy, offering devotional access to

individuals regardless of their birth or social rank, thus fostering social cohesion and cultural transformation. In Karnataka, the Dasa Sahitya—composed by Haridasas in Kannada—integrated musical expression with devotional doctrine, enabling "bhakti through music" as a lived spiritual engagement. *Bhakti* literature also played a key role in shaping regional vernacular identities and cultural memory, with the Vaishnava Padavali movement in medieval Bengal nurturing an earthy, lyrical celebration of Radha-Krishna love in poetic gatherings (Schelling, 2011). In sum, *Bhakti* literature is distinguished by its emotive, inclusive, and vernacular thrust—whether as protest literature contesting social hierarchy (Oza, 2020), as poetic devotion mediated through music, or as vernacular poetics crossing geographic and religious boundaries (Schelling, 2011). Its legacy is a pan-Indian devotional network rather than a uniform movement, demonstrating the dynamic interplay between devotion, language, culture, and social reform.

The *Bhakti* movement emerged in South India as one of the earliest and most influential expressions of devotional religiosity, beginning in Tamilakam, and became the foundational impetus for vernacular devotional poetry across the subcontinent. It originated in the early medieval period (circa 6th–9th centuries CE) through the evocative hymns of the Alvars (*Vaishnava saints*) and *Nayanars* (*Shaiva saints*), including luminaries such as *Appar*, *Sambandar*, *Sundarar*, *Manikkavāśagar*, and *Andal*. Their *Tirumurai* and related hymns in Tamil represented a radical turn toward personal devotion as a path to salvation, accessible irrespective of caste or lineage (e.g., *Andal's Tiruppāvai* and *Nachiyan Tirumozhi*). Within this broader South Indian milieu, *Kerala's Bhakti* literature emerged somewhat later and in distinctive forms. One of the earliest extant works in Malayalam, *Thirunizhalmala* (13th century), belongs to the *pattu* genre and reflects Vaishnavite devotional motifs, temple rituals at Aranmula, and early mythic narratives such as the Parasurama legend. In the early 12th century, the poet Cheraman Perumal Nayanar was recognized among the *Nayanars*, composing devotional poetry that aligned *Kerala* with the Tamil Shaiva *bhakti* tradition. Tremendous literary blossoming followed in the early 15th century, when Cherusseri Namboodiri wrote *Krishnapāttu* or *Krishna Gatha*, in simple Malayalam drawn from the *Bhagavata Purana*, making devotional poetry widely accessible across age and social strata (Pillai, 2022). Simultaneously, the *Niranam* poets—Kannassa Panickers such as *Niranam Rama Panicker*, *Malayinkeezhu Madhava Panicker*, and *Vellangalloor Sankara Panicker*—produced Malayalam renderings of the *Ramayana*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, and *Bharatamālā*, linking classical Sanskrit tradition with vernacular devotional expression (Pillai, 2022). Further enriching the devotional corpus, *Poonthanam Namboothiri* (1547–1640) authored the celebrated *Jñānapāna*, a heartfelt hymn of Krishna devotion penned not in Sanskrit, but in Malayalam. He emphasized that earnest devotion transcends learned scholarship: even a simple utterance of "Krishna" suffices to move the divine. Scholars locate his work within the broader *pāttu* tradition—lyrical devotional songs meant for oral performance and community recitation.

A defining figure in shaping the Malayalam script and devotional literary culture is Tunchaththu Ezhuthachan (16th century). He standardized the use of the Grantha-derived Arya script for Malayalam, replacing older *Vattezhuthu*, and rendered into Malayalam the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. His works helped establish a devotional literary vernacular that was populist in form and penetrating in reach, functioning as a counter to the Sanskritic predominance of the period. From a socio-cultural angle, the *Bhakti* literature of *Kerala*—especially *Poonthanam's*—was deeply egalitarian, leveling hierarchical divides and validating devotion irrespective of caste or scholarly erudition (Pillai, 2022). This ethos resonates with Kerala's broader historical trajectory, where caste-based Brahminical rituals were contested and subaltern voices asserted devotional intimacy with the divine. In modern times, Kumāran Āśān (1873–1924), a marginalized caste poet, composed *Stōtrākṛitikal*, devotional hymns exploring love and spiritual completeness from a subaltern standpoint. His hymns express a longing to overcome "incompleteness" imposed by social untouchability, thereby expanding Kerala's *Bhakti* legacy to include marginalized perspectives.

The analytical process of this work followed a sequential interpretative strategy involving theme identification, comparative evaluation, and integrative interpretation. In the first stage, textual themes were identified through close reading of *Harināmakīrthanam*, *Jñānapāna*, and *Nārāyaṇīyam*, focusing on recurring eschatological motifs such as the moral decay of *Kaliyuga*, the salvific potential of divine remembrance, and the ethical regeneration of society through devotion. Passages that directly addressed conceptions of time, cosmic decline, or spiritual regeneration were categorized as key eschatological references. In the second stage, comparative analysis was applied to trace convergences and divergences among these texts with relation to their interpretation of redemption, moral order, and the spatial significance of Bharath (India) within the eschatological vision. Each theme was then cross-examined against the larger philosophical foundations of Hindu eschatology—particularly *pralaya* (cosmic dissolution) and *moksha* (liberation)—to understand how Kerala's *Bhakti* authors localized global cosmological concerns within their regional and cultural setting. In the third stage, interpretive synthesis combined these textual discoveries into a broader hermeneutic framework, matching them with the study's conceptual model of "historical eschatology." This synthesis offered an understanding of how devotional ethics and political imagination converge, changing *Bhakti* literature from a merely spiritual corpus into a socio-political rhetoric of moral renewal. Throughout these steps, interpretive validation was obtained through intertextual cross-referencing with the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and associated scriptural texts, assuring both textual fidelity and philosophical coherence in the study.

3.2 India in Hindu eschatology

The devotional tradition that evolved in south India's numerous vernacular languages throughout the medieval period maintains a prominent position both in India's and Hinduism's society, culture and history (Knipe, 2010). While talking of Hindu eschatology, one of the significant issues a researcher meets is that, unlike Abrahamic religions, Hinduism has no last day or end time, no completion of any history, the resurrection of the dead and the universal last judgement. For a Hindu, death is a short interruption in the succession of live bodies for an individual to experience rebirths (Knipe, 2010). The Hindu epics and *Purāṇas* speak of recurrent death for the universe itself. Discussions surrounding *pralaya*, the constant dissolution of the earth and its ultimate resurrection, were a standard issue in Hindu eschatology (Knipe, 2010). In such settings, cosmic time is differentially split. Periods between global dissolution are called as *Kalpās*, and they are segmented into four declining world ages *Yugās*, which are *Kṛta*, *trēta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali*. In the current *Yuga*, the *Kali* is believed to be as burdensome and harshest (Knipe, 2010).

Since much of the sacred writings of Hinduism extend back to the ancient period, one of the latest and most credible resources to comprehend Hindu eschatology and its relevance to India may be found in the *Bhakti* tradition and the literature developed out of this. The *Bhakti* movement in Kerala was a reaction to the declining socio-cultural and religious circumstances of the time lasting from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The *Bhakti* movement that centered or mediated the holy literature was launched with Cherussery, who wanted to make his work '*Krishnagādha*' a method of devotion, especially among women, with the objective of gaining *mōksha*, that is, salvation.

It was Thunchath Ezhuthachan who made substantial contributions to the spiritual and cultural change of Kerala. Thunchath Ramanujan Ezhuthachan (16th century), revered as the father of the Malayalam language, occupies a foundational place in Kerala's literary and cultural history. He is credited with standardizing the Malayalam script by adapting the Grantha-based Arya script in place of Vattezhuthu, thereby ensuring the language's accessibility for literary and devotional expression. Ezhuthachan's greatest contribution lies in his creative re-renderings of Sanskrit epics and *Purāṇas* into Malayalam, most notably the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam* (composed in *kīlipāṭṭu* or "parrot-song" style), *Mahābhārata*, and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. These works were not mere translations but interpretative retellings that infused *bhakti* ideals with linguistic simplicity and cultural resonance,

making them intelligible to ordinary devotees (Aiyyar, 2014). His *Harināmakīrtanam* further reflects his emphasis on the repetitive chanting of divine names as a path to salvation, especially in the spiritually challenging context of *Kaliyuga*. Through these literary interventions, Ezhuthachan democratized scriptural knowledge, challenged elite custodianship of sacred texts, and consolidated a devotional ethos that bridged classical Sanskritic tradition and vernacular religiosity. Consequently, his legacy is not only literary but also socio-religious, as he laid the groundwork for Malayalam's evolution as a vibrant literary language while simultaneously advancing the egalitarian spirit of the *Bhakti* movement in *Kerala* (Aiyyar, 2014). His works, including *Adhyāthmarāmāyaṇam*, *Mahābhāratham*, *Uthararāmāyaṇam*, *Devīmāhāthmyam*, and *Harināmakīrthanam*, immortalised his role and significance in *Kerala*.

Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri (1560–1646) stands as one of the most distinguished scholars and poets of medieval *Kerala*, renowned for his Sanskrit devotional masterpiece *Nārāyaṇīyam*. A prodigious intellectual grounded in Vedantic philosophy and Sanskrit poetics, Bhattathiri composed the *Nārāyaṇīyam* at the Guruvayur temple, condensing the vast *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* into a succinct devotional text of 1,034 verses (Aiyyar, 2014). Written in a highly refined style, the work is both a literary achievement and a spiritual offering, extolling the glory of Lord Krishna while simultaneously articulating the path of *bhakti* as a means of liberation in the morally and spiritually declining age of *Kaliyuga*. Tradition holds that Bhattathiri, suffering from severe paralysis, undertook the composition as an act of surrender, believing that devotional recitation and poetic dedication would bring divine healing. Beyond its religious significance, *Nārāyaṇīyam* reflects the intellectual milieu of *Kerala*'s scholastic traditions, blending rigorous scriptural exegesis with emotive devotional expression. It also reinforced the centrality of the Guruvayur temple as a cultural and spiritual hub in *Kerala*. By combining the authority of Sanskrit learning with the accessibility of devotional religiosity, Bhattathiri's contributions exemplify the syncretic and reformative spirit of *Kerala*'s *Bhakti* movement, marking him as both a literary luminary and a cultural architect of devotional Hinduism in South India. Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri in his work *Nārāyaṇīyam* preached the idea of *Bhakti* as the path to redemption in the *Kaliyuga*.

Poonthanam Namboodiri (1547–1640) is celebrated as one of the most influential voices of the *Bhakti* movement in *Kerala*, remembered for his simple yet profoundly devotional poetry in Malayalam. Unlike the erudite Sanskrit compositions of his contemporary Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri, Poonthanam chose the vernacular to reach common people, thus democratizing religious expression. His most renowned work, *Jñānapāna* ("Song of Wisdom"), is a philosophical and devotional composition that blends advaitic insights with an unwavering emphasis on personal devotion to Lord Krishna (Aiyyar, 2014). Written in accessible Malayalam verse, it underscores humility, moral conduct, and the recitation of the divine name as the surest path to salvation in the age of *Kaliyuga*. Poonthanam's devotional worldview was deeply egalitarian, often affirming that sincere devotion outweighed ritualistic precision or scholarly pride. His works, including *Santhānagōpālam* and *Śrīkrṣnakarnāmr̥tam*, highlight the themes of surrender, divine grace, and the accessibility of moksha to all, regardless of caste or learning. Through this approach, Poonthanam not only enriched the spiritual literature of *Kerala* but also articulated a religious philosophy that offered solace and empowerment to marginalized groups. His legacy continues to be revered in *Kerala*'s cultural memory as the embodiment of humility, compassion, and unpretentious devotion. Poonthanam Namboothiri's *Santhānagōpālam*, *Jñānapāna* and *Śrīkrṣnakarnāmr̥tham* highlighted that reciting the holy names of God leads to salvation in this lifetime overcoming caste and class boundaries. His devotional teachings are regarded vital to *Kerala*'s *Bhakti* movement. Apart from this Kurooramma and VilwamangalamSwamiyar were also instrumental in shaping *Kerala*'s religious culture highlighting the importance of *Bhakti* as a means of attaining spiritual liberation (Kusuman, 1989).

As we have seen here, the objective of *Bhakti* literature is to give moral and theological direction to regular people amid the harshest and most afflicted age of *Kaliyuga*.

Ezhuthachan's *Harināmakīrthanam* vividly demonstrates the necessity of remembering God and escalates into the area of spirituality.

*"Holy recollection of Lord Should be in the babbling tongue
Then it is easy to obtain salvation
During this worst period Hari Narayana Nama"* (Nair, 1975).

The folks unwantedly waste their days chatting about terrible topics utilizing their mouths. But if that mouth had been used to remember God, it would have been easy to acquire Moksha in this *Kaliyuga*. Since *Kaliyuga* is an era dominated by and burdened with malevolent things and activities, remembering and reciting the heavenly names itself can lead to salvation. It reveals the easiest path to gain salvation in *Kaliyuga*. Poonthanam's *Jñānappāna* too makes a similar recommendation like this.

*"Among the four Yugas, the Good is Kali
Because redemption is easy here
Saying, Krishna KrishnaMukundaJanardhana Krishna Govinda Rama.
There is no effort, than Chanting the holy names"* (Gopikuttan, 2003).

Both the above-mentioned masterpieces, Ezhuthachan's *Harināmakīrthanam* and Poonthanam's *Jñānappāna*, have a significant part in Keralites' daily life. Such works underline the necessity to escalate in the spiritual realm by remembering the holy name throughout the continuing *Kaliyuga*, highlighting that the *Bhakti* literature that is produced in *Kaliyuga* plays a crucial role in reviving the religious values and morality in everyday life. While this literature is part of day-to-day existence, it pulls people close to spirituality and morals by quickly alerting them of the disintegration of the ongoing *Kaliyuga*. Moving on, *Jñānappāna* strikingly shows the primacy of Indian geography in *Kaliyuga* and its relevance.

*"People from thirteen worlds, Six Islands, Eight Continents,
The people of Bharath, But from other Yugas
Thanks and celebrates Kaliyuga of Bharath
Because for them, salvation is tough.
They honour Kali and Bharatha
And yet they wish to be born As a small weed on this sacred soil"* (Gopikuttan, 2003).

Here, Poonthanam plainly indicates that Bharath, that is, India, is the finest place to be born and live in *Kali Yuga* when the world is plagued by worstness. Although, the poets praises *Kaliyuga* it is only because while comparing with other Yugas the easiest way to attain salvation is in *Kaliyuga*. Here, underscoring the harshness of *Kaliyuga* and its evil character poet suggest that *Kaliyuga* become a time and space where it is easy to attain salvation. While connecting this with contemporary politics, we may have logically related this with Hinduism's concept of India and its society. While other countries of the world neighboring India are chaotic with conflicts and crises, India sustains its march towards prosperity and growth. Strategically and diplomatically, having an unsettling connection with every global power, India safely secures its role in world geopolitics. While *Kaliyuga* and its consequences are dominating even India, it struggles to move forward as *Bhakti* or holy literature indicates things with an intrinsic logic *Jñānappāna*'s views regarding India's vital role, even during the darkest period among all other countries, are indicative of India's significance in world geopolitics. The spatial and chronological emphasis bestowed upon India in this *Bhakti* literature is sought from *Bhāgavatha Purāṇa*. Similar recommendations which are highlighting the central position of India during the *Kali Yuga* as an easy place to acquire salvation can be seen in Melpathur Bhattathiri's *Nārāyaṇīyam* also (Gopikuttan, 2003). Considering all these literary collaborations that appeared as part of the *Bhakti* tradition, which is obviously indicative of India's crucial position in the present world, *Kaliyuga* can be regarded as part of historical eschatology in Hindu eschatology. When

global political powers like Britain, America, and Israel are formulating their administrative and foreign policies in accordance with their historical and mythical eschatologies, there should have been attempts by Indian intelligentsia to develop a historical eschatology from religious scriptures. Such attempts may provide more logical coherence and historicity in political praxis as this scripture's politics is built on virtuous morals and values. The statements of historical or political eschatology found in the *Bhakti* literature of Kerala state that the reformative attempts of the *Bhakti* movement mediated through religious literature were not confined to religious and cultural spheres only; rather, they had and still have political implications.

4. Conclusion

The image of India (Bharath) as a preferred location for spiritual progress during *Kaliyuga* in these writings shows a deeper relationship between religious philosophy and geopolitical relevance. This approach aligns with India's current position in global politics, as it maintains a careful balance despite regional and international problems. The political consequences of the *Bhakti* movement and its literature transcend beyond their immediate religious and cultural impact. By providing a framework for evaluating past and contemporary events through the prism of Hindu eschatology, these books offer significant insights for constructing coherent political policies anchored in ancient values and morality. In conclusion, the study of *Bhakti* literature and its eschatological features illustrates the varied influence of religious philosophy on Indian society, culture, and politics. It highlights the necessity for a fuller investigation of Hindu historical eschatology in scholarly and political debate, potentially guiding policy-making and diplomatic initiatives in the present world. The *Bhakti* tradition and its accompanying writings have played a vital role in defining India's socio-cultural, religious, and political landscape, particularly in Kerala. Emerging as a response to entrenched social hierarchies, ritual formalism, and moral decay, the movement redefined religiosity by situating devotion and ethical responsibility at the center of communal life. By employing vernacular languages, *Bhakti* poets such as Ezhuthachan, Poonthanam, and Melpathur Bhattathiri democratized spiritual knowledge, thereby enabling access to divine ideals beyond elite or Brahmanical circles. These texts did not merely function as religious compositions but also as cultural instruments of reform, shaping collective memory and offering guidance to communities navigating the uncertainties of *Kaliyuga*. Thus, *Bhakti* literature, while rooted in scriptural wisdom, assumed the character of a living theology that both challenged social inequities and provided solace to the marginalized.

From an eschatological perspective, the conceptualization of *Kaliyuga* in *Bhakti* writings reflects an alternative mode of thinking about time and history, distinct from the linear apocalyptic visions of Abrahamic religions. By presenting cyclical temporality, the literature underscored resilience, moral vigilance, and devotional remembrance as tools to withstand the trials of an age marked by disorder and decline. At the same time, the persistent emphasis on India (Bharath) as a sacred geography for spiritual advancement demonstrates how eschatological imagination became intertwined with notions of cultural identity and geopolitical centrality. In this sense, Kerala's *Bhakti* corpus can be read as a localized but powerful articulation of Hindu historical eschatology, one that affirms India's enduring role as a spiritual axis even during global crises. The political ramifications of these insights are equally significant. Just as Western nations such as the United States and Israel have drawn upon biblical eschatologies in shaping ideological orientations and foreign policies, Indian intellectual and political discourse can benefit from engaging its own religious and literary traditions. A rigorous incorporation of Hindu eschatology, as expressed in *Bhakti* texts, into academic and policy frameworks may enable the development of a uniquely indigenous mode of political thought grounded in ethical and spiritual values. Such a perspective could enrich contemporary debates on governance, diplomacy, and cultural identity, offering a model that resists both cultural amnesia and blind imitation of external paradigms. In conclusion, the study of *Bhakti* literature and its

eschatological dimensions demonstrates that religious texts are not confined to the spiritual domain alone but possess enduring relevance for cultural continuity, social justice, and political imagination. By bridging the past with the present, and myth with history, *Bhakti* literature equips us with intellectual and moral resources to confront the dilemmas of modernity. Future research must therefore continue to excavate the layered meanings of Hindu historical eschatology in order to illuminate alternative pathways for India's socio-political and cultural development in an increasingly fragmented world.

While this study presents an interpretive framework connecting *Kerala's Bhakti* literature to the broader discourse of Hindu historical eschatology, it necessarily operates within the constraints of subjective hermeneutics. The interpretive process, informed by the researcher's philosophical approach and historical awareness, realizes that eschatological meanings are not set within texts but are perpetually rebuilt through reading and contextualization. Consequently, the results presented here reflect one conceivable configuration of meaning rather than an extensive or conclusive description. Another restriction resides in the small textual corpus analyzed—primarily the works of Ezhuthachan, Poonthanam, and Melpathur Bhattathiri. While these books form the doctrinal and aesthetic nucleus of *Kerala's Bhakti* canon, they represent only a fraction of the extensive devotional and intellectual literature across India that deals with apocalyptic themes. A more extended comparative study integrating Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, or *Bengali Bhakti* sources could uncover regional variances in how eschatological consciousness develops within diverse linguistic and cultural situations. Future study may also incorporate interdisciplinary approaches—combining textual hermeneutics with political theology, comparative philosophy, and cultural studies—to analyze how Hindu eschatological imaginaries continue to inform India's intellectual, ethical, and political existence. Such investigation could further highlight how devotional writing operates not simply as a chronicle of faith but as a dynamic mode of cultural theorization that predicts and analyzes the moral circumstances of modernity.

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Author Contribution

The author independently conducted the research, including the design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation.

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The author declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this work, the author used Grammarly to assist in improving grammar, clarity, and academic tone of the manuscript, QuillBot to support paraphrasing and refinement of sentence structure. After using these tools, the author carefully reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and overall integrity of the publication.

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