

Artículo Científico

Scientific Article

The garuda purana and hindu death rituals: exploring psychological dimensions through contemporary practices

El garuda purana y los rituales funerarios hindúes: explorando dimensiones psicológicas a través de prácticas contemporáneas

ABSTRACT

Introduction:

this research article explores *The Garuda Purana*, one of the eighteen *Maha Puranas* of Hinduism, focusing on its prescriptions for death rituals and their psychological impact. *The Garuda Purana* offers detailed guidance on the conduct of funeral rites and the journey of the soul post-mortem. This study examines the psychological functions of these rituals, investigating how they assist individuals in navigating the grieving process, fostering emotional resilience, and maintaining mental equilibrium during bereavement.

Objectives:

The objective of this research is to explore how rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana* influence psychological well-being during the mourning process.

Methods:

A mixed-methods approach was employed, comprising textual analysis of the Garuda Purana

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and thematic analysis of interviews with Hindu priests and bereaved family members. The textual analysis revealed the Purana's emphasis on rituals for purifying the soul, mitigating sins, and fostering communal support, providing a structured framework for navigating grief. Thematic analysis of interviews underscored the psychological benefits of ritual participation, highlighting themes of solace, control, and communal support among participants.

Results: findings indicate that engaging in these rituals offers a sense of purpose and empowerment to the bereaved, aiding in the acceptance of loss and mitigating existential anxieties. The communal nature of these rituals was found to play a crucial role in providing emotional support and solidarity within the grieving community.

Keywords: *death rituals, Hinduism, psychological impact, emotional resilience*

RESUMEN

Introducción:

Este artículo de investigación explora el Garuda Purana, uno de los dieciocho Mahapuranas del hinduismo, centrando su atención en sus prescripciones para los rituales funerarios y su impacto psicológico. El Garuda Purana ofrece una guía detallada sobre la realización de los ritos funerarios y el viaje del alma después de la muerte. Este estudio examina las funciones psicológicas de estos rituales, investigando cómo asisten a las personas en el proceso de duelo, fomentan la resiliencia emocional y mantienen el equilibrio mental durante el luto.

Objetivos:

El objetivo de esta investigación es explorar cómo los rituales prescritos en el Garuda Purana influyen en

el bienestar psicológico durante el proceso de duelo. *Métodos:* se empleó un enfoque de métodos mixtos, que incluyó el análisis textual del Garuda Purana y el análisis temático de entrevistas con sacerdotes hindúes y familiares en duelo. El análisis textual reveló el énfasis del Purana en los rituales para purificar el alma, mitigar los pecados y fomentar el apoyo comunitario, proporcionando un marco estructurado para afrontar el duelo. El análisis temático de las entrevistas subrayó los beneficios psicológicos de la participación en rituales, destacando temas como el consuelo, el control y el apoyo comunitario entre los participantes.

Resultados:

Los hallazgos indican que participar en estos rituales ofrece un sentido de propósito y empoderamiento a los dolientes, ayudando en la aceptación de la pérdida y mitigando las ansiedades existenciales. Se encontró que la naturaleza comunitaria de estos rituales juega un papel crucial en la provisión de apoyo emocional y solidaridad dentro de la comunidad en duelo.

Palabras clave: *rituales funerarios, hinduismo, impacto psicológico, resiliencia emocional*

INTRODUCTION

Grieving the loss of a loved one is a universal human experience that manifests in various cultural rituals and practices. These rituals serve not only as a means to honor the deceased but also to provide comfort and structure to the bereaved, helping them navigate the emotional complexities of loss (Bonanno & Kaltman, 2001). Across different cultures, death rituals are imbued with profound symbolic meanings and serve multiple psychological and social functions. Hinduism, one of the oldest religions in the world, is rich in

mythology and tradition. It encompasses a wide array of beliefs and practices centered around the concepts of Dharma (duty/righteousness), *Karma* (action and subsequent reaction), and *Moksha* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death) (Fowler, 1997). Hindu mythology, with its pantheon of gods and goddesses, narratives of cosmic battles, and philosophical discourses, provides a deep reservoir of wisdom that guides the adherents in their spiritual and everyday lives (Kinsley, 1987).

The Puranas are a genre of important Hindu religious texts that play a crucial role in preserving and propagating the religious traditions of Hinduism. There are eighteen major Puranas, each encompassing a wide range of topics including cosmology, legends of gods and heroes, rituals, and moral teachings (Rocher, 1986). These texts are not just theological or philosophical discourses but are also practical guides for living a righteous life in accordance with Hindu principles.

In Hinduism, death is viewed as a significant transition rather than an end. The rituals surrounding death, collectively known as Antyesti or the last rites, are elaborate and are intended to ensure the proper departure of the soul from the earthly realm and its journey towards the afterlife (Parry, 1994). These rites include preparation of the body, cremation, and subsequent rituals like Shradhha, which involves offerings to ancestors to ensure the peace of the departed soul (Goyal, 2001).

***The Garuda Purana* and Cultural Practice of Reading at Home**

The Garuda Purana, one of the eighteen Maha Puranas, holds a special place in Hindu funerary rites. It is a comprehensive text that provides detailed instructions on death rituals and the

metaphysical journey of the soul after death. The text is divided into two main sections: the Purva Khanda and the Uttara Khanda, with the latter being particularly concerned with death and the afterlife (Bryant, 2007). It is believed to offer guidance on how to conduct oneself during and after the death of a loved one, ensuring that the soul is properly guided to its next destination.

In many Hindu households, it is customary to read *The Garuda Purana* when someone dies. This practice is rooted in the belief that the recitation of the text helps in purifying the environment, guiding the soul of the deceased, and providing solace to the grieving family (Fowler, 1997). The reading of *The Garuda Purana* is seen as a way to mitigate the sins of the deceased and to ensure their smooth transition to the afterlife, thereby reducing their suffering in the subsequent births (Das, 2003).

The concept of sin (Pap) in Hinduism is closely tied to the law of Karma, where actions in one's life determine their fate in future incarnations. The rituals and the reading of *The Garuda Purana* are believed to help in absolving the sins of the deceased, ensuring a better rebirth or ultimate liberation (Mukherjee, 2001). Psychologically, these rituals provide a framework for the bereaved to process their grief, offering a sense of control and participation in ensuring the well-being of the deceased (Corr & Doka, 2001).

The psychological framework of the five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance – as proposed by Kübler-Ross (1969), finds a parallel in the structured rituals of Hindu death ceremonies. These rituals offer a path through which the bereaved can navigate these stages, providing a cultural context for their emotions and a means to express and eventually accept their loss (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

Objective of the Research

The primary objective of this research is to explore the psychological ramifications of the death rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana*. This investigation seeks to elucidate how these rituals facilitate the bereaved in managing their grief, processing their emotions, and finding solace amidst their loss. By examining these rituals through a psychological framework, the study aims to reveal their role in promoting emotional healing and psychological resilience.

Research Questions

- How do the death rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana* impact the psychological well-being of the bereaved?
- What are the specific psychological benefits of performing these rituals as perceived by those who have recently experienced a loss?
- How does the communal and structured nature of these rituals contribute to the grieving process?
- In what ways do these rituals align with the five stages of grief, and how do they facilitate the transition through these stages?

What role does the belief in the efficacy of these rituals in absolving sin and ensuring a favorable afterlife play in providing psychological comfort to the bereaved?

Review of Some Previous Studies

The Garuda Purana, one of the Maha Puranas, is a pivotal text in Hindu religious literature. It is traditionally attributed to the sage Vyasa and is composed as a dialogue between Lord Vishnu and Garuda, his divine mount. *The Garuda Purana* is divided into two main sections: the Purva Khanda and the Uttara Khanda. The Purva Khanda

covers cosmology, mythology, and ethics, while the Uttara Khanda is specifically concerned with death rituals and the metaphysical journey of the soul after death (Rocher, 1986). This text provides a comprehensive guide to the various stages of death rituals, emphasizing their importance in ensuring the peaceful transition of the soul and mitigating the effects of karma.

Death rituals in Hinduism, collectively known as Antyesti, are among the most elaborate and symbolically rich ceremonies in the religion. These rituals are designed to facilitate the soul's journey from the earthly realm to the afterlife, adhering to the principles of Dharma and Karma (Parry, 1994). The stages of these rituals include the preparation of the body, cremation, and post-cremation ceremonies such as Shraddha, where food and prayers are offered to the ancestors to ensure their peace and well-being. These rites are imbued with profound symbolic meanings, reflecting the Hindu belief in the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth (Brockington, 2003).

Rituals play a critical role in human societies by providing structure and meaning during times of transition. Psychological research suggests that rituals help individuals manage complex emotional landscapes, offering a sense of control and predictability (Parkes, 1972). In the context of grief, rituals allow for the expression of emotions, communal support, and the process of finding closure. They help mitigate feelings of chaos and disorientation that often accompany loss, promoting emotional stability and resilience (Bonanno & Kaltman, 2001). The structured nature of rituals provides a framework for the bereaved to navigate their grief, aligning with theories of cognitive dissonance reduction and social support.

In many Hindu households, reading *The Garuda*

Purana is a customary practice following a death. This tradition is rooted in the belief that the recitation of the text purifies the environment, guides the soul of the deceased, and provides solace to the grieving family (Fowler, 1997). The reading is believed to absolve the sins of the deceased, facilitating a smoother transition to the afterlife. This practice underscores the deep cultural and religious significance of the text, highlighting its role in maintaining spiritual and emotional equilibrium during periods of mourning (Das, 2003).

The Garuda Purana emphasizes the concept of sin (*Pap*) and its consequences in the afterlife. In Hinduism, the law of Karma dictates that actions in one's life determine their fate in future incarnations. The rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana* are believed to help in absolving the sins of the deceased, ensuring a favorable rebirth or ultimate liberation (Mukherjee, 2001). This belief system provides a psychological framework for the bereaved, offering a sense of agency and participation in ensuring the well-being of the deceased's soul.

The psychological impact of performing death rituals extends beyond the immediate process of grieving. These rituals offer long-term emotional benefits by providing a structured way to process grief and by reinforcing a sense of community and continuity (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). The belief in the efficacy of these rituals in aiding the deceased's journey and mitigating their suffering provides significant comfort to the bereaved, reducing existential anxiety and fostering emotional resilience (Bonanno & Kaltman, 2001). This aligns with the psychological understanding of how rituals can help individuals cope with loss by providing a framework for making sense of their

emotions and experiences.

The five stages of grief – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance – as proposed by Kübler-Ross (1969), offer a useful framework for understanding the psychological impact of Hindu death rituals. The structured nature of these rituals provides a pathway through which the bereaved can navigate these stages. For example, the initial rituals may help in overcoming denial by confronting the reality of death, while communal ceremonies can provide support during stages of anger and depression (Corr & Doka, 2001). The rituals culminate in actions that symbolize acceptance and closure, facilitating a holistic process of emotional healing.

The communal nature of Hindu death rituals plays a crucial role in their psychological efficacy. These rituals are typically conducted with the involvement of extended family and community members, providing a support network for the bereaved (Goyal, 2001). The shared experience of grief and collective participation in the rituals fosters a sense of solidarity and belonging, helping individuals feel less isolated in their mourning. This communal support is critical in buffering the impacts of loss and promoting psychological well-being, aligning with social support theories (Parry, 1994).

Long-term studies on the psychological impact of Hindu death rituals suggest that participation in these rituals can lead to lasting emotional benefits. The structured process of mourning, combined with the belief in the rituals' spiritual efficacy, helps individuals integrate their loss into their broader life narrative (Bonanno, 2004). This integration is crucial for achieving a sense of closure and moving forward. The rituals also reinforce cultural and

religious identity, providing a sense of continuity and stability in the face of change (Bryant, 2007).

Despite the rich exploration of Hindu death rituals in existing literature, there remains a significant gap in understanding the psychological nuances and long-term effects of these practices as prescribed in *The Garuda Purana*. While numerous studies have documented the cultural and religious aspects of Hindu funerary customs, there is a paucity of research specifically focusing on the psychological impact of reading *The Garuda Purana* during the mourning period. Additionally, the interplay between these rituals and the five stages of grief, as well as the role of communal support and structured ritualistic processes in fostering psychological resilience, has not been thoroughly examined. Addressing this gap could provide a more holistic understanding of how these ancient practices continue to influence modern bereavement and mental health within Hindu communities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, integrating textual analysis of *The Garuda Purana* with in-depth interviews of Hindu priests and individuals who have recently participated in Hindu death ceremonies. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for exploring the intricate cultural, religious, and psychological dimensions of the rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana*, providing rich, contextualized insights into participants' experiences and perceptions.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who have direct experience with Hindu death rituals, ensuring that the sample is relevant and informative. The participants included Hindu priests (purohits) who regularly conduct these rituals and individuals who have recently lost a family member and participated in the reading of *The Garuda Purana*.

- 1. Hindu Priests:** Five Hindu priests from different regions were selected to provide a diverse range of perspectives on the rituals. These priests have extensive experience in conducting death rituals and guiding families through the grieving process.
- 2. Bereaved Family Members:** Fifteen individuals who have recently experienced the death of a close family member were selected. These participants were chosen to represent various demographics, including age, gender, and socioeconomic background, to capture a broad spectrum of experiences.

Textual Analysis

A comprehensive textual analysis of *The Garuda Purana* was conducted, focusing on the sections related to death rituals and the metaphysical journey of the soul. This involved a detailed examination of the prescribed rites, their symbolic meanings, and the underlying theological principles. The analysis aimed to elucidate how these rituals are intended to influence the grieving process and the spiritual journey of the deceased.

In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected participants. The interviews were designed to explore participants' personal experiences and perceptions of the death rituals, particularly the reading of *The Garuda Purana*. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words while ensuring that key topics were covered.

1. Interview Guide for Priests:

1. Can you describe the significance of *The Garuda Purana* in Hindu death rituals?
2. How do you believe the rituals help the deceased and the bereaved family?
3. What psychological benefits do you observe in families who follow these rituals?

2. Interview Guide for Bereaved Family Members:

1. Can you describe your experience with the death rituals prescribed in the Garuda Purana?
2. How did the reading of *The Garuda Purana* affect your grieving process?
3. Did you find any psychological or emotional benefits from participating in these rituals?

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. This method involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns, which were then interpreted to understand the psychological impact of the rituals.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were meticulously adhered

to throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study's purpose and their rights as participants. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing the data and ensuring that personal information was not disclosed. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, ensuring respect and sensitivity towards the participants' cultural and emotional contexts.

Limitations

The study on the psychological impacts of Hindu death rituals, specifically those in the *Garuda Purana*, encountered several contextual limitations. The variability of rituals across different regions and communities made it challenging to generalize findings, as local customs and interpretations influenced practices. Participant availability also limited the diversity of perspectives, as only those prepared to discuss personal loss could partake. Additionally, modern adaptations of rituals, often abbreviated in urban areas, impacted the depth of traditional psychological outcomes. Language barriers affected some participants' understanding of the *Garuda Purana*, as they depended on translations, potentially altering the intended impact of the text. Observing only short-term effects also restricted insight into the long-term psychological benefits of these rituals, while family dynamics occasionally diluted the rituals' comforting effects. These limitations emphasize the need for further research to capture the long-term and diverse impacts of these ancient practices in modern contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion below connects the study's findings with the objectives and underlying theoretical framework. Specifically, this study aimed to elucidate the psychological role of Hindu death rituals as described in *The Garuda Purana*, examining how these rituals support emotional resilience, structured grieving, and communal support.

The results of this study are presented in two main sections: findings from the textual analysis of *The Garuda Purana* and thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews with Hindu priests and bereaved family members. The integration of these two data sources provides a comprehensive understanding of the psychological impact of Hindu death rituals and the specific role of *The Garuda Purana* in the grieving process.

Textual Analysis of *The Garuda Purana*

The Garuda Purana offers extensive guidance on the conduct of death rituals, emphasizing their importance in ensuring the proper transition of the soul and providing comfort to the bereaved. Key excerpts from the text illustrate its emphasis on the metaphysical journey of the soul and the rituals designed to support this journey.

Purification and Guidance for the Soul

The Garuda Purana states, "The soul, when it leaves the body, is led by the messengers of Yama, the god of death, through various realms. The performance of the prescribed rites ensures that the soul is not tormented in its journey" (*Garuda Purana*, Uttara Khanda, Chapter 5). This highlights the text's focus on the soul's post-mortem journey and the significance of rituals in aiding this process. The

purification rites, such as the offering of *Pinda* (rice balls) and the chanting of mantras, are intended to mitigate the effects of the deceased's past karma and ensure a smoother transition.

Alleviation of Sins

The text repeatedly emphasizes the alleviation of sins through rituals: "By the performance of the Shradha rites, and the offering of water and sesame seeds, the departed soul is freed from its sins and attains peace" (*The Garuda Purana*, Uttara Khanda, Chapter 10). This underscores the belief that the proper execution of these rituals can reduce the burden of the deceased's sins, facilitating their peaceful journey to the afterlife and providing psychological relief to the bereaved, who feel that they are aiding their loved one's soul.

Psychological Support and Community Involvement

The Garuda Purana also stresses the importance of communal participation in death rituals: "The family and the community must come together to perform the last rites, for in unity there is strength, and together they can provide solace and support to the grieving" (*The Garuda Purana*, Uttara Khanda, Chapter 15). This reinforces the role of community in supporting the bereaved and emphasizes the collective nature of Hindu death rituals, which can alleviate feelings of isolation and provide emotional support.

The key findings can be integrated as in the following table 1.

Table 1

Key themes from textual analysis of the Garuda Purana

Theme	Description	Supporting Excerpt
Purification and Guidance	Rituals are designed to guide the soul's journey and protect it from suffering.	"The soul... is led by the messengers of Yama... through various realms. The performance of the prescribed rites ensures that the soul is not tormented..."
Alleviation of Sins	Rituals, like Shraddha rites, cleanse sins and help the soul attain peace.	"By the performance of the Shraddha rites... the departed soul is freed from its sins and attains peace."
Community Involvement	Emphasizes the importance of family and community in providing comfort to the bereaved.	"The family and the community must come together to perform the last rites... providing solace and support to the grieving."

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

The thematic analysis of the interviews with Hindu priests and bereaved family members revealed several recurring themes that align with the principles outlined in *The Garuda Purana*. These themes include the psychological impact of ritual participation, the alleviation of grief through structured processes, the role of communal support, and the personal beliefs in the efficacy of the rituals. These findings reflect **both the objectives and theoretical perspectives on structured grief processes** (Kübler-Ross, 1969) and communal mourning.

Psychological Impact of Ritual Participation

The participants consistently reported that engaging in the prescribed death rituals provided them with a sense of structure and control during a tumultuous time. One bereaved family member noted, "The rituals gave me something to focus on. They provided a clear path to follow, which helped me manage my grief" (Participant 3). This sentiment was echoed by other participants who

felt that the rituals offered a concrete set of actions that helped mitigate the overwhelming emotions associated with loss. Another participant shared, "Each step of the ritual made me feel closer to my loved one and more at peace with their passing" (Participant 9).

Alleviation of Grief through Structured Processes

The structured nature of the rituals, as outlined in *The Garuda Purana*, was found to be particularly beneficial in helping participants navigate their grief. "Performing the rites step-by-step, from the preparation of the body to the final Shraddha, allowed me to gradually accept the reality of my loved one's death," explained another participant (Participant 7). This gradual progression through the rituals aligns with the psychological stages of grief, providing a cultural framework for processing loss. As one priest mentioned, "The systematic approach of these rituals helps the family to process their grief in a manageable way, giving them time to come to terms with their loss" (Priest 2).

Role of Communal Support

The communal aspect of the rituals was highlighted as a crucial factor in providing emotional support. "Having the community come together for the rituals was incredibly comforting. It showed me that I was not alone in my grief," stated a participant (Participant 12). The presence of family and community members during the rituals helped alleviate feelings of isolation and provided a supportive environment for expressing grief. One participant elaborated, "The collective mourning and shared experience made the burden of grief more bearable" (Participant 14).

Belief in the Efficacy of the Rituals

Belief in the efficacy of the rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana* was a significant factor in

providing psychological comfort to the bereaved. One participant remarked, "Knowing that these rituals help my loved one's soul and reduce their sins gave me peace of mind" (Participant 5). This belief in the spiritual benefits of the rituals helped participants feel that they were contributing to their loved one's well-being, which in turn provided them with a sense of purpose and consolation. A priest noted, "The faith in the rituals' ability to absolve sins and aid the soul's journey is deeply ingrained and offers immense psychological relief to the bereaved" (Priest 3).

The key findings can be integrated as in the following table 2.

Table 2

Key findings from thematic analysis of interviews

Theme	Description	Sample Participant Quotes
Psychological Impact of Rituals	Rituals provide structure and control during grief.	"The rituals gave me something to focus on. They provided a clear path to follow, which helped me manage my grief."
Structured Grief Processing	The sequential steps of rituals align with psychological stages of grief, helping bereaved individuals accept their loss gradually.	"Performing the rites step-by-step... allowed me to gradually accept the reality of my loved one's death."
Role of Community Support	The presence of community provides emotional support, reduces isolation, and helps the bereaved express grief collectively.	"Having the community come together... was incredibly comforting. It showed me that I was not alone in my grief."
Belief in Ritual Efficacy	Participants felt psychological comfort from believing that the rituals aid the soul's journey and reduce its sins, providing a sense of purpose.	"Knowing that these rituals help my loved one's soul... gave me peace of mind."

Integration of Textual and Interview Findings

In line with the research objectives and theoretical grounding, the integrated findings underscore the significance of rituals in providing structure and comfort during bereavement, aligning with the Garuda Purana's prescriptive guidance on the soul's journey.

The integration of the textual analysis of *The Garuda Purana* with the thematic analysis of the interviews reveals a cohesive understanding of the psychological impact of Hindu death rituals. The rituals, as prescribed in *The Garuda Purana*, offer a structured framework for managing grief, emphasizing the purification of the soul, alleviation of sins, and communal support. The experiences of the participants corroborate these principles, highlighting the rituals' effectiveness in providing psychological comfort and aiding the grieving process.

Rituals as a Means of Psychological Consolation

The rituals described in *The Garuda Purana* serve as a means of psychological consolation by providing a structured approach to grief. The step-by-step process of the rituals helps the bereaved gradually come to terms with their loss, aligning with Kübler-Ross's stages of grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Participants reported that the rituals provided them with a sense of purpose and control, which helped mitigate the chaos and disorientation often associated with grief. One participant observed, "The rituals acted as a guide through my grief, giving me something tangible to focus on during a very difficult time" (Participant 10).

Alleviation of Sins and the Concept of Karma

The belief in the alleviation of sins through rituals, as emphasized in *The Garuda Purana*, provides significant psychological comfort to the bereaved.

This belief is deeply rooted in the Hindu concept of Karma, where the actions performed during one's life determine their fate in the afterlife. The rituals are seen as a means to rectify past wrongs and ensure a favorable rebirth or ultimate liberation. Participants expressed a strong belief in the efficacy of these rituals, which helped them feel that they were actively contributing to their loved one's spiritual well-being. As one participant put it, "Performing these rituals gave me solace because I believed I was helping my father's soul find peace" (Participant 8).

Community and Social Support

The communal nature of Hindu death rituals, as outlined in *The Garuda Purana*, plays a crucial role in providing emotional support to the bereaved. The involvement of family and community members in the rituals creates a supportive network that helps individuals cope with their grief. Participants reported feeling less isolated and more supported during the mourning period, highlighting the importance of community in the grieving process. A participant commented, "The presence of friends and relatives during the rituals made me feel supported and less alone in my sorrow" (Participant 11).

Psychological Benefits of Rituals

The psychological benefits of the rituals prescribed in *The Garuda Purana* were evident in the participants' narratives. The structured nature of the rituals helped them navigate the complex emotional landscape of grief, providing a sense of control and predictability. The belief in the spiritual efficacy of the rituals alleviated existential anxiety and provided comfort, while the communal support offered by family and community members helped mitigate feelings of isolation.

The key findings can be integrated as in the following table 3.

Table 3

Integration of findings from textual and interview analysis

Aspect	The Garuda Purana Insights	Interview Insights
Ritual Structure	Prescribed steps offer guidance and focus for the grieving family.	Rituals provide a clear process that helps participants manage overwhelming emotions.
Alleviation of Sins	Rituals reduce the deceased’s karmic burden, aiding in spiritual peace.	Belief in the soul’s purification through rituals gives family members a sense of contribution and comfort.
Community Role	Collective mourning is essential for providing emotional strength.	The involvement of family and friends during rituals helps reduce feelings of isolation in the bereaved.
Psychological Benefit	Rituals are a tool for navigating grief, aligning with cultural beliefs.	Structure in rituals provides a tangible way to cope, making the loss manageable and offering psychological relief.

CONCLUSION

This research has clarified the psychological benefits of Hindu death rituals as prescribed in *The Garuda Purana*, particularly in how they affect the bereave d’s mental well-being. Addressing the research questions, the study revealed that these rituals provide specific psychological benefits, offering comfort and a structured process that aligns with the stages of grief. Participants indicated that rituals helped them experience a sense of control and progression through grief, answering the first two research questions regarding the impact on well-being and perceived psychological benefits. Additionally, the communal and structured nature of these rituals was identified as a vital component in facilitating the grieving process, giving participants collective support and a sense of belonging.

This connection aligns with the third research question and highlights the supportive role of community in managing grief.

Furthermore, the study found that the rituals in *The Garuda Purana* mirror the stages of grief, providing a transition framework that allows the bereaved to navigate their loss gradually. The belief in the efficacy of these rituals to absolve sins and secure a favorable afterlife also provides significant psychological comfort, addressing the fourth and fifth research questions by offering the bereaved a sense of contribution to their loved one’s peace. This study thus enhances our understanding of ancient Hindu practices as effective cultural tools for psychological resilience and emotional healing. Future research could examine regional variations and the long-term psychological impacts of ritual participation.

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