



Hindu Initiation and Death Rituals: A Jungian Perspective on Individuation

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Abstract

This paper explores Hindu initiation and death rituals through the lens of Jungian individuation theory, identifying their psychological and transformative relevance beyond religious practices. Individuation, in Jungian psychology, refers to the process by which an individual integrates various aspects of the psyche both conscious and unconscious to achieve a unified and authentic self. The *Upanayana* ceremony, which traditionally marks a young boy's transition into disciplined learning and spiritual responsibility, represents the beginning of individuation by facilitating detachment from familial and societal bonds, removing egoic attachments, and cultivating self-awareness. Similarly, Hindu death rites function as significant psychological processes that help the performer through mourning, introspection, and the integration of conscious and unconscious identities. These rites allow people to confront death, learn detachment, and harmonize with the cosmic order. A critical re-examination of gender roles within these rituals indicates that, whereas men participate in symbolic rites to initiate individuation, women do so more directly through biological and social events such as menstruation, childbirth, and care-giving. This viewpoint challenges traditional critiques of exclusivity and maintains that individuation is a universal but gender-specific journey. The study employs a theoretical and symbolic analysis rooted in classical Hindu texts and Jungian psychological concepts. It emphasizes the decline in enthusiasm for ritual acts, claiming a lack of symbolic comprehension. By reframing rituals as processes for personal growth and self-discovery, they might be revived to fulfill modern psychological and spiritual requirements. Finally, this study emphasizes Hindu ritual's lasting importance, establishing them as bridges between tradition and transformation while reinforcing their role in creating self-awareness, purpose, and collective well-being.

Keywords Individuation, Hindu Rituals, Upanayana, Antyesthi, Shraddha, Symbolism in Rituals, Spiritual Transformation, Gender Roles in Rituals



Introduction

Individuation, a major concept in Jungian psychology, refers to the process of self-realization and the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life. It entails discovering one's actual self through the integration of opposites such as the conscious and the unconscious. Analysis serves as a catalyst for individuation, enabling a distinct relational space in which individuals can explore truth and self-expression. This transformative process allows for experiences that transcend cultural conventions. As Jung states, "Individuation means becoming an 'in-dividual,' and, insofar as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood'" (Jung, 1972). It serves as a powerful treatment for disorders such as anxiety, depression, neuroses, and addictions; conditions often rooted in feelings of stagnation or unfulfilled potential. Individuation confronts the existential awareness of life's brevity and offers a path toward personal integration and meaning (Jung, 1968).

Ritual, defined as a set of symbolic actions often rooted in religious or cultural norms, plays a vital role in psychological, emotional, and social functioning. Rituals regulate emotions, build communal bonds, and sharpen attention toward meaningful goals (Hobson et al., 2018). Jung notes that rituals, especially mystery dramas like the slaying and resurrection of Osiris, allow participants to experience symbolic death and rebirth, archetypes of personal transformation that promote renewal, hope, and a sense of continuity (Jung, 1991). Scholars have also observed that highly ritualized societies, such as those shaped by Confucianism, exhibit greater self-control and psychological resilience than less ritual-oriented cultures (Butler et al., 2007; Whitehouse, 2002).

The Aryans placed immense importance on rituals, with the *Vedas* (the foundational scriptures of Hinduism) serving as detailed ceremonial guides. Composed of the *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, and *Upanishads*, the first three sections emphasize ritual procedures and their symbolic meaning. Hindu rituals today span both public and domestic spheres: while many are performed in temples and directed toward deities, a vast number occur within homes as deeply personal practices. Their functions range from fulfilling spiritual obligations to fostering moral education, creating social cohesion, expressing respect or affiliation, and even enabling personal reflection (Srivastava & Barmola, 2013).

Despite their diversity, rituals such as *Upanayana* (initiation ceremony) and *Antyeshthi/Shraddha* (death rites) have rarely been examined for their psychological implications, particularly in relation to personal development and identity formation. Scholarly works on Hindu rituals (Michaels, 2004; Doniger, 1991) have emphasized their symbolic depth and cultural significance, yet few have approached them through a Jungian psychological lens. This paper aims to reinterpret these traditional Hindu rituals through the lens of Jungian individuation, proposing that they are not merely religious duties but also symbolic journeys of self-realization.



Objectives

This study intends to answer the research question: How do Hindu initiation (*Upanayana*) and death rituals (*Antyeshthi and Shraddha*) reflect the process of Jungian individuation, and how do gender differences influence their psychological significance? It aims to explore the symbolic meanings within these rituals that support psychological transformation and to examine how gender shapes the experience and meaning of these rites. Additionally, the paper investigates the reasons behind the modern decline in ritual participation and suggests ways to revive these practices by emphasizing their psychological importance. Ultimately, the study intends to bridge Hindu ritual traditions with analytical psychology to offer new insights into personal growth and cultural continuity.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Carl Jung's theory of individuation, which refers to the psychological process by which an individual integrates unconscious elements with conscious awareness to become a whole, authentic self. Jung viewed individuation as a central goal of human development, requiring confrontation with inner opposites and archetypes such as the shadow, anima/animus, and the Self. Central to this process is the symbolic journey marked by separation, transformation, and reintegration that parallels many traditional rites of passage. Rituals, particularly those involving initiation and death, were seen by Jung as externalized dramas of internal transformation, often facilitating ego transcendence and psychological renewal (Jung, 1968; Jung, 1991).

Mircea Eliade (1959) similarly emphasized that rituals mark the transition from one stage of existence to another, often representing symbolic death and rebirth that connect the individual with cosmic or mythic time. For Eliade, ritual reenacts sacred stories and places the individual within a timeless structure of meaning. Wendy Doniger (1991) further elaborates on the symbolic depth of Hindu rituals, illustrating how acts like offering, purification, and renunciation encode layered meanings tied to myth, memory, and identity.

In the context of Hinduism, initiation rituals like *Upanayana* symbolize the departure from childhood and the assumption of disciplined responsibility, echoing the separation and rebirth motifs in individuation. Death rituals such as *Antyeshthi* and *Sraddha* guide individuals through a confrontation with impermanence, loss, and symbolic ego dissolution, central themes in Jungian integration. While traditional Hindu interpretations emphasize dharma, karma, and moksha as spiritual objectives, this paper reinterprets these rituals as psychological tools that mirror the internal journey of individuation. The framework also explores how gendered access to symbolic rites in Hindu traditions shapes differentiated pathways to wholeness, particularly as women undergo biological transitions like menstruation and childbirth that hold their own initiatory power.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical methodology that relies on textual analysis and symbolic interpretation. Primary sources include Hindu writings like the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, as well as Carl Jung's studies on individuation and archetypes. The rituals are



examined via a Jungian psychological lens, emphasizing their symbolic structure and transformative function. A comparative perspective emphasizes how gender influences the ritual experience, with men performing symbolic rites and women engaged in embodied procedures. This theory views Hindu rituals as psychological tools for self-realization and inner unification.

Upanayana (*Yagnopavit*)

Upanayana, which is commonly performed at the age of eight or older, introduces the kid into *brahmacharya* (a celibate student life). The kid gets the sacred thread (*yagnopaveetam*) from the master (*guru*), which represents the start of a new life of discipline and learning. Along with the sacred thread, the pupil receives the *Gayatri Mantra*, which is regarded the essence of all teachings. The pupil is taught the rules and procedures for regular chanting and *sandhyabandhanam* (Maru & Burboz, 2024). In Sanskrit, *Upa* is translated as 'close' and *nayana* as 'to bring'. This way, *Upanayana* refers to the process which brings one closer to god. The sacred thread (*Yagnopaveetam*) represents the boy's responsibility to his self, family and society. The *Gayatri Mantra*, imparted during the *Upanayana* ceremony, is a prayer that invokes brilliance and purity in the intellect and consciousness, guiding the individual to self-realization. Various studies show that *sandhyabandhanam* and chanting the *Gayatri Mantra* reduce stress, anger, anxiety, depression, negative emotions, *rajas*, and *tamas gunas*. Mantra chanting connects one with a deeper inner self, resulting in a calm and balanced state of mind, improved mental health, quality of life, and general well-being (Bhat & Amrutha, 2022; Kesar et al., 2023).

The author argues that the current understanding of objectives of *Upanayana* concentrates mainly on its religious and cultural significance, with an emphasis on discipline, learning, and spiritual initiation. However, this viewpoint may not adequately address the ritual's symbolic and psychological aspects. Jung's individuation theory, which centers on self-integration and the journey toward wholeness, is suggested as a framework to bridge this interpretative gap.

Upanayana and The Jungian Lens: Archetypes, Shadow and Integration

Individuation begins with the separation from the unconscious childhood stage, which is represented by the boy's shift from kid to adulthood. The *upanayana* marks this rite of transition by ceremonially removing the youngster from the "shadow" of his earlier self. The sacred thread and rituals represent his growing awareness and the desire to incorporate more mature aspects of himself. In Jungian terminology, the initiation in the *Upanayana* represents the beginning of the hero's journey. The boy is entering a spiritual and psychological journey towards self-realization.

For instance, in many Brahmin families in Nepal, after receiving the sacred thread, the boy is expected to wake up before sunrise, perform *Sandhyavandana*, and live under the strict discipline of his guru. These acts, though often seen as religious customs, initiate a profound internal confrontation with routine, identity, and responsibility, marking the start of a deeper journey toward selfhood. This relates to the "call to adventure" phase of individuation, in which the individual sets out on a journey to explore and understand their deeper essence, integrating all elements of their identity. During the *upanayana* ceremony, the boy takes vows of duty,



purity, and discipline. These vows indicate the boy's conscious decision to take on obligations and responsibilities that are consistent with his developing personality. They can be viewed as part of confronting the "shadow" of unconscious urges and impulses, guiding them toward personal growth and society service. The vow of celibacy could be interpreted as a dedication to self-control and refusing to be overcome by unconscious desires.

The sacred thread worn during the ceremony can be understood as a mandala, which is a major Jungian symbol of wholeness and unity. The thread symbolizes the boy's transformation from his divided early self into a more unified totality. Wearing it represents the boy's conscious acceptance of his duty and responsibility, which aligns with the process of individuating the conscious self from the unconscious parts of identity. This could be viewed as the initiation into the archetype of the Wise Self or the Self archetype, which represents the totality of the psyche. Through the ritual, the boy starts his journey of discovering and embodying this larger, holistic self. The priest (*guru*) in the ceremony might be interpreted as a depiction of the wise elder archetype, which is critical in individuation. In Jungian psychology, the wise elder helps the individual achieve self-awareness and maturity. During the ceremony, the priest delivers spiritual instruction, assisting the kid to integrate knowledge of his roles and responsibilities, as well as his spiritual and psychological maturation.

The sacred fire (*yajna*) in *upanayana samskara* represents transformation and purification. Fire is frequently related in Jungian terminology with the act of destroying the old self in order to make room for the new. It symbolizes the transformation of raw psychic material into a more polished and conscious form. This is analogous to the process of individuation, in which the individual sheds old patterns and emerges as a more integrated and conscious self. Individuation involves reconciling the masculine and feminine sides of the personality. The boy's passage into maturity in the *upanayana* represents a step toward integrating these elements, as he learns about his obligations as a man (masculine) while also receiving teachings that promote compassion, caring, and nurturing (feminine aspects). This balance is essential for psychological health.

A play is carried out during *Upanayana* in some Hindu communities such as the Nepalese in which the boy is separated from his parents and sent out to acquire knowledge on his own. This act could be seen as part of the individuation process, in which the youngster begins to break out from his familiar and ego-driven ties of "me and mine." This detachment enables the development of a better understanding of oneself, free of the constraints of external identities and things. The journey away from home represents the boy's psychological and spiritual separation from the ego, allowing knowledge, discipline, and compassion to flourish, all of which are essential components of individuation.

Antyesthi and Shraddha (Death Rituals)

Hindu texts provide detailed prescriptions for rituals associated with death, encompassing the anticipation of death, preparation of the corpse, body disposal, and ceremonies aimed at ensuring the soul's journey to the afterlife and its prosperous rebirth (Ghosh and Athira, 2022). These rituals emphasize both spiritual and material preparation for the deceased's transition to the next phase of existence (Arora, 2021).



Offerings such as grains, sugar, everyday goods, a plot of land (in earlier times), and a silver or gold coin are given to Brahmins in anticipation of death, reflecting the idea that the deceased will accumulate spiritual merit (*punya*) (Singh & Nath, 1999). Among these, *Gaudan* (the gift of a cow) is highly valued. According to the *Garuda Purana*, donating a cow to a Brahmin helps the departed overcome the obstacles on their eternal journey, including crossing the river *Vaitarni*, which is thought to represent the soul's hardships. After the death of a person, before the body is taken for disposal, *pindas* (rice flour balls) must be offered. This procedure is repeated during the funeral and for twelve days after death, known as *shraddha* rites. *Pinda* means body, hence the purpose of *shraddha* is to create a temporary body for the disembodied self throughout its after life journey (Filippi, 2005). For the disposal of body, cremation is prescribed as the method, based in the belief that fire serves as a mediator between humans and the divine. The texts also specify rituals to be performed during cremation, including mantras to be chanted, and the direction in which the body should be placed. After burning the deceased, the remainings (*asthi*) are immersed in the river. To express grief, intimate relatives of the deceased are required to follow rules such as celibacy. The *Garuda Purana* should be recited after few days following death. The *Garuda purana* explains what happens after death, whether a person travels to paradise or hell based on their actions, the nature of heaven and hell, and the duration of the soul's stay before reincarnation (Bhat & Surendran, 2022). The funeral ceremony ends with *kiryakaram* on the thirteenth day after death. The annual *Shraddha* is a Hindu ceremony conducted on a family member's death anniversary to honour their memory and assure their spiritual serenity. It includes offerings such as *pinda daan*, *tarpan* (water), and feeding Brahmins (current trends include feeding at old age homes, orphanages and providing donations) . When performed with faith and discipline, it is thought to help the deceased on their spiritual path while also benefiting the family.

Such rituals, deeply embedded in the Hindu worldview, are traditionally regarded as essential for securing the soul's safe passage and favorable rebirth. Tripathi (2022) highlights how Hindu death rituals frame the deceased's journey as a liminal passage, where the individual transitions between the realms of life and death. The sacredness of this in-between phase reinforces both psychological detachment and spiritual purification for the doer. Laungani (2006) notes that these ceremonies also play vital roles in community cohesion and intergenerational transmission of values. They embody a spiritual symbolism that reinforces the interconnectedness of life, death, and the afterlife.

Individuation in Death Rituals

Unlike the traditional perspective, which emphasizes the benefits of death rituals for the soul of the deceased, the individuation theory shifts the focus to their psychological and transformative impact on the doer, highlighting their role in the individual's mental and emotional growth. A shloka mentioned by Lord Krishna in the Bhagwad Geeta:

*"Yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvam
Tyajaty ante kalevaram
Tam tam evaiti kaunteya
Sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitaḥ"*



(BG 8.6)

meaning that the state of being one remembers at the time of death, that state they will attain without fail implies that the path of the soul is already decided by the supreme law at the time of death. Two other verses from the *Gita* further illuminate the psychological and symbolic function of death rites:

*“Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca;
Tasmād aparihārye ’rthe na tvam śocitum arhasi”*

(BG 2.27)

“For one who is born, death is certain; and for one who has died, birth is certain.

Therefore, you should not grieve over the inevitable.”

This verse emphasizes the cyclical nature of life and death and encourages the mourner to develop detachment rather than despair; an emotional shift central to the individuation process. The ritual, therefore, becomes a tool for cultivating this detachment and for healing.

*“Uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet;
Ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ”*

(BG 6.5)

“Let a man lift himself by his own self; let him not degrade himself. For the self alone is the friend of the self, and the self alone is the enemy of the self.”

In this context, the general (existing) understanding of performing rituals as a way to simplify the journey of the spirit soul lacks depth. These shlokas collectively hint that the true necessity of death rituals lies in their transformative value for the doer, not the departed. They emphasize self-upliftment, detachment, and conscious action; core elements that align with the psychological purpose of performing such rites. Death denotes not only physical demise, but also transition and renewal. The cremation procedure, as specified in Hindu rites, can be viewed as a symbolic act of liberating the physical body (ego) and permitting the soul (Self) to leave its earthly bonds. The fire, which is important to cremation, represents purity, the elimination of the old, and the alchemical process of transformation. In Jungian perspective the ritual serves as an external mirror for the psychological process of letting go, helping the practitioner (doer) to confront mortality and detach from material associations. The act of breaking the skull to release the final breath (*dhananjaya vayu*) during cremation has significant symbolic significance. Jung highlighted the significance of freeing psychological energy locked in outdated frameworks. This rite may represent the removal of residual attachments, both physical and emotional, to help the soul's journey. For the doer, this act unconsciously represent the need to break rigid patterns of thought and allow the psyche to evolve toward greater understanding and integration. Offering *pinda daan*, reciting mantras, and making symbolic offerings are not just physical acts; they engage the unconscious mind, linking the performer to deeper aspects of their psyche. For example, mourners often report that the act of offering *pindas* brings them a sense of closure, as if they are feeding and caring for the soul one last time. This symbolic caregiving can soften grief and initiate emotional healing by anchoring memory in meaningful action. They provide a link between conscious acceptance of loss and unconscious processing of death's transformational potential. These rituals help the mourner



individuate by bringing unconscious fears, attachments, and the reality of impermanence into conscious awareness. Traditional beliefs hold that rituals such as *gaudan* (cow donation) and fire offerings facilitate the soul's journey. From a Jungian point of view, these acts also benefit the doer by allowing them to symbolically enact the processes of selfless offering and detachment, which are necessary stages toward individuation. By engaging in rituals, the doer unconsciously overcomes their personal anxieties of death, improves their connection to the collective unconscious, and moves closer to psychological completeness.

Shraddha is observed annually to signify the connection between the living and the departed, reminding participants of their roots and the continuation of life. By invoking the presence of ancestors, the ritual promotes the idea of perpetual life and the cyclical nature of existence. It enables the doer to confront the truth of death and realize the fleeting nature of life, instilling humility and thankfulness. The annual *shraddha* can be understood as an act of remembrance which integrates the archetypal wisdom of the ancestors into the doer's psyche, strengthening their sense of self and developing individuation. As a ritual, it reflects the archetype of the Wise Elder, representing the ancestor's collective wisdom and promoting inter-generational understanding. This integration of ancestral archetypes aids in the individuation process by allowing the doer to reconcile their personal identity with the collective unconscious.

Participation in rituals such as *Shraddha* has recently dropped, particularly among metropolitan families who may consider them antiquated. This decline in enthusiasm has psychological ramifications; the loss of ritual structure eliminates chances for emotional expression, symbolic closure, and connection with ancestral memory, all of which contribute to individuation. Revitalizing these traditions does not necessitate firm traditionalism, but may involve reinterpretation. For example, replacing Brahmin feeding with community service in orphanages or old age homes keeps the ethos of selfless giving. Similarly, educating participants through the psychological significance of rites, rather than just scriptural protocols, can make rituals more personally transformational and culturally meaningful.

Rituals, Women and Individuation

Traditionally, Hindu philosophy placed a high value on men's roles as *grihastha* or householders, who are responsible for upholding *dharma* within the family. The belief that a wife's karma is connected to her husband's is deeply rooted in the Hindu community, where she is often referred to as *ardhangini* (half of the husband's body), sharing his merits (*punya*) and demerits (*papa*) (Bhat & Amrutha, 2022). Hindu funeral rituals too have designated sons or male family members as the chief performers of rituals such as *pinda daan*, *kapalkriya*, and *tarpan* (Saha, 2024). Also, the gendered differentiation in hinduism has frequently been talked for marginalizing women's participation and reinforcing patriarchal standards (Rijal, 2024). The Manusmriti verse,

*"Yatra nāryastu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ, yatra itaastu na pūjyante sarvāstrāphalāḥ
kriyāḥ"*

meaning "Where women are honored, divinity flourishes; where they are dishonored, all actions, no matter how noble, remain fruitless" is often cited to highlight the esteemed position of women in Hinduism, particularly in response to criticisms. However, without a more in-



depth grasp of its context and implications, it risks becoming a mere rhetorical defense rather than a true guiding principle expressed in action.

However, through the lens of Jungian individuation, the division can be interpreted as a reflection of deeper psychological and symbolic processes, rather than just exclusion. Jung's individuation theory emphasizes the need to integrate the conscious and unconscious minds in order to achieve self-realization. Males, according to this viewpoint, frequently experience the world symbolically, need external rituals and representations such as *Upanayana*, *Antyesthi* and *Shraddha* to traverse their interior psychological journeys. Death rituals are one such symbolic means, allowing men to confront ideas of mortality, separation, and the fleeting aspect of existence. In contrast, women's individuation is intrinsically connected to their physiological and visual reality. Menstruation, separation from home after marriage, childbirth and menopause all provide direct, sensory experiences with life, death, and regeneration. These biological and emotional milestones are naturally linked to the archetypal cycles of creation and dissolution, therefore symbolic rituals are less important for their individuation process.

While symbolic rituals may be more suited to the male psychological framework, this does not decrease women's spiritual potential to participate in death rites. In many areas, women perform important responsibilities in assisting with the grief process, making offerings, and maintaining the sacredness of the ritual atmosphere. These acts help the family's collective healing and spiritual upliftment. Furthermore, as conventional gender roles shift, there is a growing awareness of women executing death rites, particularly when a son is missing. Through the lens of individuation theory, this change signifies the merger of traditionally feminine and masculine functions, resulting in a more holistic approach to ritual. Reinterpreting gendered roles in death rites using Jungian individuation theory provides a more balanced perspective. It not only explains the historical emphasis on male participation, but it also underlines the direct avenues to individuation that women can take. Recognizing both symbolic and experiential paths allows us to create a more inclusive worldview, aligning rituals with society's growing values while keeping their psychological and spiritual relevance.

Critiques of Jungian Theory in Cultural Contexts

While Jung's theory of individuation provides a valuable interpretative lens, numerous scholars caution against applying it uncritically across cultures. Arnett (2008) and Henrich et al. (2010) point out that most psychological models come from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) societies, which may not be representative of non-Western contexts. In line with this, Kakar (1991) warns that Western psychoanalytic frameworks, including Jung's, may misinterpret Eastern spiritual traditions without cultural adaptation. These critiques show how important it is to put Jungian interpretations in the context of Hindu traditions, focusing on local metaphysical goals like ego-dissolution, dharma, and moksha instead of universal ego-integration, and being aware of the different cultural and psychological realities that exist.

Limitations and Cultural Variations Within Hinduism

While this research claims that Jung's theory of individuation might be used to reinterpret Hindu initiation and death ceremonies, there are significant limits to this approach. Hinduism



is not one cohesive tradition, but rather a complicated web of regional practices, sectarian ideology, and caste-based differences. The structure and symbolism of rituals like *Upanayana*, *Antyeshthi*, and *Shraddha* vary greatly between regions; what has deep symbolic value in one environment may not have the same psychological ramifications in another. While orthodox traditions restrict death ritual performance to sons, areas such as Bengal (in *Shakta* traditions), urban Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, and portions of Nepal have witnessed daughters or female family members execute these ceremonies, particularly in the absence of male heirs. Reformist organizations like Arya Samaj have also promoted egalitarian involvement about gender roles in ritual.

Finally, this work does not include empirical data or ethnographic descriptions to help root these insights in actual experience. The study is mostly theoretical and symbolic, and while insightful, it may not reflect the entire psychological or social influence of rituals as they are practiced today. Future research might look at personal narratives, regional case studies, and cross-cultural comparisons to see how well mapping individuation onto Hindu ritual frameworks works.

Conclusion

The *Upanayana* rite, which traditionally marks the transition into disciplined learning and spiritual duty, represents the beginning of individuation. It is a journey in which the initiate departs from familial and societal attachments, guided by the *guru*, in order to seek enlightenment and grow self-awareness. This symbolic detachment reflects the breaking of ego and attachments, which is necessary for the development of compassion and a greater awareness of oneself and the cosmos. When viewed via a Jungian perspective, such rituals become universally relevant as transforming agents for personal growth and integration.

Death rituals are profoundly important in Hindu tradition, acting as more than ceremonial customs. They are transforming processes that are deeply ingrained in psychological and spiritual contexts. These rituals represent the destruction of egoic attachments, which allows the doer to reflect, heal, and evolve. Death rituals, as seen through the perspective of Jungian individuation theory, emerge as archetypal acts that help people integrate their conscious and unconscious identities. By participating in the symbolic parts of these rites, the doer confronts the reality of mortality, cultivates detachment, and connects with the larger cosmic order. This transforming journey, which is often neglected, highlights the ritual's importance as tools for negotiating the human experience of loss and impermanence. The involvement of women in these rites provides a differed perspective. Women, who have traditionally been excluded from performing some rites, experience individuation more directly through biological and social functions such as menstruation, childbirth, and care giving. These experiences expose them to the physical and emotional reality of life and death, providing a more direct path to self-realization than the symbolic representation required of men. This understanding challenges traditional criticisms of exclusivity by emphasizing that all genders go through the process of individuation, albeit through distinct paths. Reinterpreting these roles can help to restore



balance and inclusiveness in ritual practices, confirming their psychological and cultural value in current times.

The declining enthusiasm of rituals implies a growing disconnection from their original intent and symbolic meaning. These practices can be rejuvenated by re-framing them as tools for individuation and self-discovery, making them more relevant to modern spiritual and psychological demands. Religious teachers, scholars, and community leaders can promote this reinterpretation through conscious efforts in education, inter-generational dialogue, and temple discourses, encouraging reflection rather than mere performance. A re-emphasis on inner transformation over rigid formalism may help rekindle interest in these traditions. Hindu rituals, particularly those related with death and initiation, serve as a link between outward tradition and inward transformation, directing people on a path to integration and wholeness. In conclusion, rituals such as *Upanayana* and death ceremonies, as well as the roles of women, provide deep insights into the universal nature of the individuation process. Restoring significance to these practices not only honors their legacy, but also makes them relevant again, providing individuals and communities with pathways to greater connection, purpose, and self-awareness. Future research could complement this theoretical perspective with ethnographic or psychological studies of ritual participants. Comparative analyses with other cultures, initiation or death practices could also provide insight into how the process of individuation manifests across traditions and societies.

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