THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN COUNSELLING THE BEREAVED IN THE HINDI COMMUNITY – GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the various religious practices [rituals and ceremonies] performed by the Hindi Community in Lenasia during the period of grieving. The relevance of these practices and various ways in which they [rituals and ceremonies] could be incorporated into the modern form of psychotherapy is explored.

The death of a loved one makes those grieving the loss perform different rituals and cultural practices, depending on their respective religious doctrines. For many, the performance of these activities serves as a means of "releasing" the dead and allowing themselves an opportunity to begin the healing process. Whilst these rituals and ceremonies are deemed essential to the grieving families, it is very often undertaken amidst great financial and emotional strain. Yet, this 'financial burden' is very often overlooked and the compulsion to satisfy the "ancestors" is adhered to. This study examines the specific rituals and ceremonies practiced by the Hindi Community in Lenasia with the emphasis on how educational psychologists could incorporate some of them into the modern form of psychotherapy.

In this study, the research design, process of data collection and data analysis are described and the main themes, which emerged from the different data sources, are identified. These themes are discussed within the framework of existing psychotherapeutic models as well as cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

The findings of the study revealed that all Hindi people perform the various rituals and ceremonies during the period of grieving and they make use of various symbols in the process. Of great importance was that all Hindi people did not perform the rituals and ceremonies in exactly the same way, there was a degree of flexibility as well as inconsistencies in the manner of performing these rituals and practices. It was also very apparent that the Hindi community has a strong sense of spirituality and family bonds. The guidelines which were formulated made provision for the incorporation of the various rituals and ceremonies for educational psychologists as well as other therapists subscribing to different paradigmatic perspectives.
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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND ORIENTATION OF RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the different religious practices in the form of rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking people in Lenasia during the grieving process. The role of these rituals and ceremonies as a means of aiding the healing process is examined. This introductory chapter presents the context and rationale of the study. A discussion of the theoretical background of this field of inquiry is given and the participants are briefly described. The research question, from which the aim of the study is drawn, is formulated and the aim and objective of the study is given. The research methodology of the study is explained. A brief overview of the structure and sequence of the study is given. Terminology used in the process of grief counselling and rituals and ceremonies are briefly referred to. The chapter concludes with a review of the researcher's personal assumptions and presuppositions, including the motivation for the study.

1.2 THE CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In South Africa, thousands of people are dying of AIDS related and other terminal illnesses (Pillay T: 2002:3-4) and crime and violence has escalated to a staggering proportion. Due to these misfortunes, many people are grieving due to the loss of significant others or simply because of the impact of the prevailing mayhem. In trying to determine the place of this topic within the social context, one would simply have to refer to the local newspapers to find a story of horror, rape, murder or AIDS death statistics. In this context, it is evident that there exists a need to understand how exactly do individuals, families or communities deal with these difficulties. Furthermore, what does the educational psychologists need to know so that grief counselling can be made more meaningful. Many have attempted to overcome the period of grieving using the various support structures such as families, churches or community
organisations; by performing different rituals and practices and a few may have sought psychological intervention.

The researcher’s observation of communities during times of death and mourning has shown that different cultures within communities responded differently according to their respective religious doctrines and practices. Furthermore, these cultural practices and rituals were vital as they served to promote cathartic experiences — a means of release for both the dead and the survivors. It is difficult to understand what it is that compels the different cultural groups to go through tremendous financial and emotional strain in order to fulfill ritualistic or cultural obligations in times of death.

According to Jacobs (1992:3) “religious ceremony and ritual functions, mitigate anxiety and deal effectively with other problematic emotional states. Religious rites have a cathartic effect as emotions are released and expressed through attachments and connection to significant others”. In an attempt to assist those grieving, Reeves (1990:56) asserts that ‘rituals can be used to move from a maladaptive style of grieving to an adaptive style of grieving’. In view of this, it is vital that counsellors are aware of and sensitive to the need to perform these cultural practices and rituals. Since these are varied and diverse, imposing a ‘one-size-fits-all’ grief model on all clients, however well intentioned, may cause more harm than good.

In light of the aforementioned, it is imperative that the cultural context of clients be considered when counsellors are engaged in assisting the bereaved. Unfortunately, at present, in both clinical practice and social science research, one often sees a western bias in that which is considered ‘normal’, healthy and appropriate grieving. These can be at odds with the needs of the bereaved particularly when culturally appropriate grief is seen as evidence of pathology.

There is literature that is vast as it is varied on multicultural counselling. These works highlight the need for ensuring that all therapists working with culturally diverse clients must have a sense of as well as training in managing diversity. This was entrenched by the Vail Conference on Clinical Psychology sponsored by the American Psychological Association held in Colorado in 1973, which elevated the knowledge of the cultures on one’s clients to an ethical imperative
As a result of the Conference declaration, doing therapy or counselling without cultural sensitivity knowledge or awareness is not just problematic - it has been declared unethical.

It is true that several authors give valuable information on the different approaches to dealing with grief and trauma, as well as stages and steps to follow in counselling the bereaved. There appears to be a dearth of literature, however, that focuses specifically on the use of various rituals and ceremonies extracted from or related to any specific religious doctrines which could be incorporated into modern psychotherapeutic grief models.

Individuals, who had recently experienced the death of a significant other, as well as a priest who had conducted the various rituals and ceremonies and a psychologist who had counselled the bereaved from the Hindi-speaking community are the specific area of interest to this particular researcher, who will, henceforth, refer to herself in the first person.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Given the aforementioned assertions of Jacobs (1992:3) and Reeves (1990:56) regarding the significant role that cultural practices such as rituals and ceremonies serve in enhancing the process of catharsis, there appears to be a vacuum in the understanding of contemporary psychologists regarding ways in which these practices could be understood and incorporated into modern day psychotherapy. Therefore the research problem states that contemporary psychotherapy does not take into account the important role of cultural practices such as rituals and ceremonies during the grieving process of the Hindi community. This study aims to bridge the gap between existing forms of psychotherapy and the role of rituals and ceremonies during the period of grieving in the Hindi speaking community by providing educational psychologists with guidelines on how these [rituals and ceremonies] could be incorporated into psychotherapy.

1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general aim of the study is to explore and describe the roles and significance of the various
rituals and ceremonies that are performed by the Hindi speaking Community in Lenasia during the period of grieving. Furthermore, it aims to provide educational psychologists with guidelines on how these rituals and ceremonies could be incorporated into the western form of psychotherapy to enhance the healing process.

The sub-aims are:

- To conduct interviews with various individuals from the Hindi-speaking community to gain insight into the different rituals and cultural practices which are performed after the death of a significant other and the significance attached to these practices
- To conduct a literature review that focuses on the various models of grief counselling used in contemporary psychotherapy.
- The formulation of guidelines for educational psychologists on how rituals and practices of dealing with grief of the Hindi-speaking community could be incorporated in the therapeutic process if needed.

1.5 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the above the research questions of this investigation are:

- What are those rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking community in Lenasia that assist the bereaved in attaining catharsis during the grieving process?
- What is the significance of the various rituals and ceremonies?
- What suggestions could be offered to educational psychologists, working with clients from the Hindi-speaking Community, regarding the incorporation of certain religious/cultural practices into psychotherapy?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A literature study will be undertaken that will focus on the underlying principles of the Hindi religion and the various cultural practices such as rituals and ceremonies that are performed.
Furthermore, a literature study on the different models used in grief counselling in contemporary psychotherapy will be explored. Emphasis will be placed on the significance and effects of the rituals and ceremonies on contemporary psychotherapeutic intervention. Thereafter an in-depth qualitative study in the form of interviews will be undertaken with individuals from the Hindi community, who had recently experienced the death of a significant other; a priest who had conducted the various rituals and ceremonies; and a psychologist who had counselled the bereaved. The experiences and responses of the respondents will be described and interpreted. The themes will be described in the form of a narrative. A narrative, in keeping with my constructivist paradigm, can be described as a culturally available and appropriate story about people and about relationships which have been constructed and negotiated in communities of persons and within the context of social structures and institutions (White, 1991:28). This narrative will include components outlined by Bruner (1986:29) such as events that are linked together in particular sequences through the temporal dimension of past, present and future and according to specific themes.

The emergent themes, as well as information derived from the literature, will then be used to draw up guidelines for educational psychologists to consider when counselling clients from the Hindi community.

1.7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The researcher will present the study from the paradigmatic perspective of social constructivism. A paradigmatic perspective of the researcher, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), refers to the world view that defines the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (cited in Steyn, 2002:7). Working from a social constructivist approach, I subscribe to the notion that realities, which are both individually and socially constructed, are as divergent as they are multiple. These realities are constructed according to their unique contexts and social interactions. Donald (2002:100) postulates that knowledge is a construction of a person’s experiences, actions and context. Accordingly, human beings are seen as active agents in the construction of meaning in their own development and learning. Since each person’s world is unique and dynamic, Dechant (1997) and Seligman (1996)
maintain that the way one reacts and experiences the constantly changing world is for one, his/her reality. Furthermore, reality is seen as a creation of thought and language which grows from social interactions (Steyn, 2002:8). In keeping with the understanding that knowledge and reality is socially constructed, I will approach this study from the humanistic and phenomenological theoretical perspectives. The basic assumptions of these [phenomenological and humanistic] perspectives rests on the following, as outlined by Hammerley (1993:42): firstly that human beings are not merely acted upon by social facts or social forces but are constantly shaping and creating their own social worlds in interaction with others. Secondly, the methods have to be related to the ‘subjective’ dimension, primarily meaning the formation of meaning of the phenomenon. Thirdly, all social actions as mutually coordinated productions. The orderliness an activity displays is an accomplishment of members doing that activity and not the result of some disembodied systemic operation. Finally, that social action is practical and not rational.

Understanding that this study will be approached from a phenomenological perspective, the researcher will strive to “arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced and how the experience came to be” (Merriam, 1998:159). In this case, this study will strive to understand the rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi speaking community, their significance to the Hindi community and how they came to be, that is scriptural significance. It will also be approached from a Humanistic perspective as described by Hammersley, (1993:43) which considers the following criteria. It must pay tribute to human subjectivity and creativity by showing how individuals respond to social constraints and actively assemble social worlds; and it must deal with concrete human experiences, i.e. talk, feelings, actions, through their social and especially economic organisation (and not just their inner, psychic or biological structuring).

1.8 ETHICAL MEASURES

Ethical standards as outlined by Strydom (De Vos, 1998: 23-35) will be used as guidelines for this study. These will include the components of competency of the researcher; researcher – respondent relationship; selected sample; and restoration of participants. This will be discussed in more depth in chapter three.
1.9 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher will apply Guba's model (De Vos, 1998: 348-350) to ensure trustworthiness. The four strategies entail: truth-value, which is established by credibility; applicability which is ensured by transferability; consistency which is ensured by dependability; and neutrality which is ensured by confirmability. These will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

1.10 TERMINOLOGY

In order to be clear as to the meaning and definitions of concepts used in this study, I will briefly clarify the following terms. More detailed definitions exist in chapter two.

1.10.1 Culture and Cultural Practices

Throughout this study, the term “culture” has been used to denote the behaviour patterns, beliefs and all other products of a particular group of people that are passed from generation to generation. These products result from the interaction between groups of people and their environment over many years (Cook & Oltjenbruns, 1998:26). According to Samovar and Porter (1994:1), culture refers to “the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving”. In this study, cultural practices will refer to those practices that are accepted as a ‘way of life of a group of people’, generally without thinking about them. These practices are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

1.10.2 Personal pronouns

Where possible the Hindi-speaking people and psychologists will be referred to in the plural which obviates the necessity for gender discrimination. If not possible, the terms he or she will be used interchangeably to refer to psychologists and their clients.
1.10.3 Rituals and ceremonies

Rituals and ceremonies have been defined by Beck & Metrick (1990) as "a series of symbolic acts focused toward fulfilling a particular intention" and by Matheny, it has been described as "behavior formally organized into repeatable patterns" (Matheny 1993:5). In summary, rituals are patterned actions or behaviors that express a relationship with God, the universe, and/or one another (Matheny 1993:7). A further discussion of these concepts can be found in Chapter two.

1.10.4 Bereavement, grief and mourning

Bereavement has been described as the state of having suffered a loss. Grief, on the other hand, refers to the process of experiencing the psychological, social and physical reactions to one’s perception of loss (Cook & Oltjenbruns 1998:91). It could also be defined as the acute, emotional response to a recognised loss, which can begin before death and continue for survivors long after death. A grieving person may feel acutely sad, angry, exhausted, physically ill, frightened and emotionally vulnerable (Wass, 1979). Finally, mourning is described as a socially sanctioned expression of grief that is often characterised by crying, acute or sustained depression and an inability to summon energy and sleeplessness (Cook & Oltjenbruns, 1998:91). It is also defined as a process of reviewing and reflecting on the relationship and its meaning. Usually early in the grief process there is an idealization of the person or object that has been lost followed later by a more realistic assessment. Usually there is a going over of "treasured moments" one by one as part of the process of letting go a little at a time (Wass, 1979:15).

1.10.5 Catharsis

Catharsis is described as an intense expression of emotion, usually involving tears, anger, guilt, or profound sadness. The reality of the loss is experienced, and emotions directly connected with the loss are experienced (Tschudin, 1997).
1.10.6 Educational psychologists

The Health Professions Council of South Africa differentiates between the following categories of registered psychologists, namely, clinical psychologists, counselling psychologists, educational psychologists and industrial psychologists. The primary focus of educational psychologists is children within the education sector. The educational psychologists’ field of interest includes psychotherapeutic intervention for scholastic, emotional, and behavioural difficulties. Furthermore, they [educational psychologists] provide support and guidance for both educators and parents.

1.11 THE STRUCTURE AND SEQUENCE OF THE STUDY

What follows is a short overview of the stages of inquiry as set out in the research study.

Chapter One: Contextualisation and orientation of the research
Chapter Two: A review of the literature
Chapter Three: The research methodology – A description of the design and process of the inquiry
Chapter Four: The presentation and interpretation of the data of the study, conclusions and guidelines
Chapter five: Limitations of study and recommendation for future research

1.12 THE RESEARCHER’S PRESUPPOSITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In this study, I am the primary investigative tool. My personal point of departure is that the role of rituals and ceremonies in the Indian culture, particularly the Hindu community in invaluable. I begin from the premise these practices are vital for the purposes of healing and providing a sense of belonging and kinship. The motivation for this topic stemmed from a personal experience where a significant other was lost. Being from a different faith and performing the rituals and ceremonies which were not only alien to me but also contradicted everything I was raised to believe made me acutely aware of the need to understand and be aware of cultural
practices of the clients we as psychologists counsel. A lack of knowledge of these practices on the part of the psychologist could result in conflicting processes occurring during the counselling sessions. This process honed in on the need for me as a researcher to develop a tolerance for ambiguity and sensitivity. Since I was the primary instrument in this research study, all observations and analyses are filtered through my worldviews, values and perspectives (Merriam, 1998: 22).

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the context as well as the rationale for the study that focussed on the rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking people in Lenasia during the period of mourning. The research problem was presented and the aim of the study stated. The method of data collection had been outlined and key concepts had been briefly defined. Finally, the researcher’s assumptions and presuppositions were expressed. In chapter two, the literature related to the study will be reviewed.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is a narrative essay that integrates, synthesises and critiques important thinking and research in a particular topic (Merriam’ 1998:55). It enables a researcher to construct a theoretical framework within which particular areas of interests, ideas, concepts and approaches are captured, defined and explored. Since this study takes the form of a phenomenological exploration (see Chapter 3:33), it [the study] will seek to discover naturally arising meaning among members of the study population (Berg, 1995:24). In this instance it will seek to explore the various cultural practices in the form of rituals and ceremonies amongst the Hindi-speaking community as well as the different forms of bereavement therapy used by therapists. This literature review begins with a general clarification of the terminology used after which an exposition of basic Hindu tenets and practices will be explained. Following this, the various grief counselling models used by psychologists when counselling the bereaved will be outlined. Finally the important issues and points will be summarised in the conclusion.

2.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Although there are differences in the formal definitions of the terms bereavement, grief and mourning, for the purposes of this study, they may be used interchangeably. The differences in meanings will, however, be outlined.

2.2.1 Bereavement, Mourning and Grief

Bereavement, according to Cook and Oltjenbruns (1998:92), is explained as the state of being that results from a significant loss. The role of bereavement is seen as a “cultural, ritualised, socially sanctioned and temporary one which allows bereaved individuals to temporarily exempt themselves from social responsibilities and to be taken care of by others” (Frankel,1998: 9). According to Wass (1979:257), “the event is characterised by changes in the social context of
living and employs rights of passage as a appropriate means of coping with loss”. Bereavement may be confined to an individual family at one end of the spectrum, or may be a national response to a loss, at the other end.

As cited in the Hospice training manual (2000:7), ‘mourning’ refers to the public, socially constrained behavioural response to a loss that incorporates death ritual activities. It is viewed as the gradual acceptance and coming to terms with a life that excludes the deceased. In addition, “it denotes the social prescriptions for the way in which we are expected to display our grief and often reflects the practices of one’s culture” (Cook & Oltjenbruns, 1998:91).

Grief, according to Cook & Oltjenbruns, (1998:91) “refers to the outcome of being bereaved and involves a variety of reactions that constitute the grief response”. Grieving is generally viewed as a more intense process of strategies used by people in an attempt to cope with the acute pain of the loss of personally significant relationships. For Cook & Oltjenbruns (1998: 99), “grief is an individual’s way of regaining balance and of restoring a sense of equilibrium in one’s life”. Grief can be seen as comprising of a number of components such as thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are interlinked, some of which come earlier in the process of ‘working through’ and others later.

Whilst many proponents of grief counselling postulates the notion that grief comprises stages, there appears to be differing viewpoints. According to Hodgkinson and Steward (1991:24) “the notion of ‘stages’ implies an orderly progression whereas the bereaved oscillate to and fro between a variety of experiences which blend with each other and are not successive”. It is further stated that there is no scientific evidence to support the assertion that these stages do actually exist or that the bereaved has to experience all the elements of the process of ‘working through’. The individual may experience the intensity and duration of the elements differently.

On the other end of the spectrum, some theorists (Kubler Ross 1970, Worden 1991, Rando 1993) believe that grieving comprises of a series of tasks, which need to be completed for successful resolution. These tasks includes accepting the reality of the loss, experiencing the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment in which the loved one is no longer present and withdrawing from
the deceased and reinvesting emotional energy in new activities and relationships. Each
component will rise and fall in intensity – the intensity lessening over time and the gaps between
the peaks of feelings lengthen. The main components of grief according to the literature (Kubler
Ross 1970, Rando 1993, Worden 1991) are: shock which is a universal, initial response to
bereavement that may be momentary or prolonged. It could also be experienced as disbelief,
numbness, pain, calm, apathy or feelings that one is not real (depersonalisation) or that the world
around one is not real (derealisation). It is as if feelings have ‘turned off’. Disorganisation,
another component, is the variable element. The bereaved may respond by collapsing or may
appear super-efficient, becoming disorganised over time. The experience is one of confusion
and may be accompanied by poor concentration and memory lapses. In addition, the component
denial is a defense, a repression of an item of reality from conscious awareness. It serves to
protect the bereaved from experiencing too much pain at any one time, momentary or prolonged,
and it occurs throughout the process of ‘working through’ the process of grieving.

From the discussion above, it is evident that a distinction between grief and mourning can be
drawn. With grief viewed as the acute reaction to loss, including intense sadness, anxiety and
disorientation. Mourning, is the gradual acceptance and coming to terms with a life that excludes
the deceased. Bereavement may be viewed as the response to the loss of a significant
relationship through death, which manifests itself, and is finally resolved, through both grief and
mourning. When bereavement remains acute, unresolved or complicated, it may be the focus of
clinical attention. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Four explains it as “this category
[bereavement] can be used when the focus of clinical attention is a reaction to the death of a
loved one. As part of their reaction to the loss, some grieving individuals present with symptoms
characteristic of a Major Depressive Episode (e.g. feelings of sadness and associated symptoms
such as insomnia, poor appetite and weight loss). The bereaved individual typically regards the
depressed mood as “normal”, although the person may seek professional help for relief
associated symptoms such as insomnia, or anorexia” (2000:740).
2.2.2 Rituals and Ceremonies

Rituals can be seen as symbolic patterns of action or behaviour that can be applied in religious, social, metaphysical or other contexts. According to Matheny (1993:2), ritual may fall into two major categories. One type of ritual contains behaviours that are unconsciously repeated more or less habitually. These are the types of rituals often referred to as “routines”. In this category, we may even include some formalised rituals such as etiquette, for example, greeting an acquaintance on the street is automatic and socially expected. In some instances, you may not even care how that person feels at that moment, yet it is considered polite to inquire. The acquaintance will probably respond with an inane comment. The real purpose of the exchange is to say, “I recognise you and offer you the respect of my acknowledgment.” Those rituals of a mundane nature and those considered parts of etiquette are necessary elements of human life. The former adds a comforting predictability to life, while the latter help to define parameters of social relationships and communications.

The second major category includes those rituals, which are performed quite consciously and with a definite purpose. These are more formal in nature and are usually associated with some major milestone or transition in life. In the case of religious ritual, Bird (1980) postulates that it [ritual] provides “a means by which persons establish and maintain their relation to what they consider to be sacred” (Matheny, 1993:2).

While the aforementioned have categorised into two types, namely, those that are unconsciously performed and those which are formal and consciously considered, Beck and Metrick (1990) further classifies those formal and consciously performed rituals into types. These types include beginnings, endings, cycles, merging and healing. Since this study focuses on rituals and ceremonies during the period of grieving, I will simply mention the different types and elaborate on endings and healing. Beginnings include events such as christenings, weddings and new jobs, whilst endings deal with funerals or memorial ceremonies. Anniversaries can be seen to be cyclical celebrations, these are recurrences of notable events such as births, deaths and marriages. Merging is seen as a conscious choice for a joining to happen such as marriage, taking a housemate, or business merging. Finally, while healing is both an effect and a purpose to many
rituals within the other classifications, it can be considered separately for purposes of demonstrating its importance (Matheny, 1993: 3).

I will now expand on the two components relevant to this study. In understanding the category of endings, it is important to understand that there may be an overlap and blend with the category of beginning. Often a beginning of one stage also marks the ending of another. A funeral or memorial ceremony certainly signifies the ending of a person’s physical life here on earth, but it also marks the beginning of a very different life for those who are temporarily bereft of that person’s presence. The category of healing is pervasive in all rituals. This form of ritual is relevant any time an imbalance occurs in life. Together with a memorial service, which constitutes an ending, a part of ritual may be specifically aimed at healing the pain of separation and loss. Beck and Metrick (1990) posits that “healing rituals offer a time for you to be fully present with the pain as well as a means to finding acceptance of it” (Matheny, 1993: 3).

Having defined “ritual”, I will now outline the purpose and necessity of rituals. If ritual is found to have function and a valuable purpose, then it would follow that it would at least be beneficial if not necessary. According to Driver (1991), there are three main functions or “gifts” as he calls them which ritual bestows upon society namely, ‘order, community, and transformation’ (Matheny, 1993: 4). The sense of order or pattern brings solace and continuity to relationships (social, cosmic and spiritual). Matheny states that ‘rituals maintain order by marking times and spaces as well as by symbolising realities. It’s [rituals] clarity, recurrence, and regulation give stability and structure to society. There is also a reinforced sense of security, which harks back to our most primal needs. The stability of knowing what comes next, the part you must play and knowing that the ritual changes only slightly each time it is performed is precious to humans” (Matheny, 1993:5). Furthermore, ritual not only reflects and maintains structure, but is often integral in forming that structure. By its very nature of ordering behaviours and expectations in a continuously repeating fashion, ritual exerts some influence over the way society grows and changes. So the sense of direction and stability given by ritual serve to maintain as well as create order.

The first ‘gift’ according to Driver (1991), that is considered one of the most important aspects of ritual, is that it brings people together physically and then tends to unite them emotionally.
Driver (Matheny, 1993: 4) calls these “the gift of community”. According to Bastien and Bromley (1980):

“communal ritual enhances solidarity within a group by providing opportunities for individuals to collectively express their commitment to common values and beliefs. Group rituals result in a sense of direction and harmony which transcends any feelings of conflict, thus removing the isolation of individuals, and replacing it with a cohesive bonding. Feelings of affection and goodwill are strengthened among those participating thus restoring a state of ‘belonging’ (Matheny, 1993: 4).

The second ‘gift’ of ritual, which Driver (1991) proposes, is in its communal which provides an emotional grounding. Driver posits that “ritual controls emotion while releasing it. It [ritual] guides the emotion while letting it run to its full intensity” (Matheny, 1993: 5). Bird (1980), on the other hand, asserts that “they [rituals] provide spoken and embodied vocabularies for communicating and reconfirming intense feelings of respect, awe, sorrow, loyalty, tenderness and attraction, particularly in those situations where the use of discursive vocabularies tend to flatten the depth of feelings and/or stray off into thoughts unrelated to the sentiments themselves” (Matheny, 1993: 5).

The third ‘gift’ provided by ritual and ceremony, as Driver (1991) explains, is transition. Human beings tend to resist change but are compelled to change anyway. Dramatic transitions in life often leave the individual feeling swept up, helpless and out of control. Ritual and ceremony returns a sense of power and command. While organising, planning and participating in a ritual, “we are involved in the process of doing as opposed to being done to”. The ritual becomes the vehicle for a change in identity, as in christening or induction, or relationship to reality, as in worship or funerals. Bird (1980) sums it up as “rituals are stylised codes by means of which participants both dramatise and actualise transformations in social relations and personal consciousness” (Matheny, 1993:6).

Finally, according to Beck and Metrick (1990), traditional rituals may not speak to the individual’s needs in a profound and meaningful way. Much of the present rituals hail from a time when man not only feared God, but sought to appease him, hide from him or bargain with him”. Added to this, “we do not understand much of what we do or why and if we did, we would
probably be appalled. Much of the symbolism which is still observed today is dated from primitive times and continues to be done simply because ‘that’s the way it has always been done’ as if that very fact makes it sacred. Some of us may even have an understanding of the futility of so many rites and actions but choose to smilingly tolerate them as quaint or romantic” (Matheny, 1993:5). According to the writers, Beck and Metrick (1990), “the funeral ritual is absolutely abusive to the family as well as the memory of the loved one lost. The viewing of the body is a crude custom, which discomfits most people but is still upheld through “tradition” (Matheny, 1993:11).

I shall now begin by providing an outline of the various rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi community during the period of grieving. Before this can be done, it is important to first provide an overview of Hinduism and the tenets upon which the religion rests.

2.3 THE BASIC TENETS OF HINDUISM

Before one can analyse the various cultural practices of the Hindi-speaking community, it is essential that a basic understanding of the religion be outlined.

Hinduism is one of the world’s major religions with nearly 720 million Hindus worldwide (Bhaskarananda, 1994:1). Whilst most reside in India, there is a sizable population in different countries including South Africa. Although its exact age is difficult to determine, it is estimated to be several thousand years old. Hinduism, according to the literature (Bhaskarananda 1994, Vedalankar 1981, Vivekananda 1974), has no known founder. Accordingly, many of the ‘truths’ are said have always existed and had periodically been discovered by or revealed to ‘ancient sages’. This can be explained by the words of Bhaskarananda that “the ‘truths’ had always existed, just like the laws of gravitation had existed long before it was discovered by Newton” (1994: 4).

According to Hinduism, there is a host of scriptures which Hindus adhere to in their quest to attain the ultimate goal of liberation achieved through God Realisation -Moksha [the union with the Supreme thereby attaining freedom from the bondage of repeated births and deaths]. What
follows is a diagrammatical representation of the various scriptures and its hierarchical placement as outlined in the different texts (Bhaskarananda 1994, Vedalankar 1981, Vivekananda 1974).

2.3.1 A Diagrammatical Representation of the Scriptures in Hinduism

Diagram A: Scruti – Primary Authority

The illustration above outlines the various scriptures described as the primary authority since it is believed to be revealed to the great sages from the Supreme power. As indicated above, there are four different Vedas. Each of these Vedas comprises of three parts. These are the mantras or hymns, the Brahmanas, which are the explanations of the mantras and rituals, and the Upanishads which are the mystical expositions revealing profound truth.
Given that there exists a variety of scriptures for Hindus as illustrated above, and that many of rituals and ceremonies practiced today were extracted from or are interpretations of some of these sources, there are certain points that need to be noted.

Firstly that the Vedas were divided into two parts as outlined in the diagram above. The first part, the Karma Kanda, which was the work portion consists of various sacrifices, most of them have been given up as not practicable under present circumstances (Vivekananda, 1974: 8).

Secondly, there were different sects in India, namely, Dualists, Qualified Monists, Monists, Saivites, Vaishnavites, Saktas, Sauras and Ganapatya. All could have their own interpretations of the Vedas, but they had to obey its authority (Vivekananda, 1974: 9).

Thirdly, while the different sects, example, the Ramanujas and Advaitist may have resembled each other on many aspects of Hinduism but differed in their doctrines of the soul. Whilst the former believed that the soul is like a particle, the latter believed it[the soul] to be omnipresent.
Furthermore, the Ramanujists believe that God is one with the soul, while the Advaitist supports the notion that the soul is separate from God and is the core of Man.

Fourthly, there are many different scriptures of the Hindu religion of which some were written by sages [Smṛtis] as depicted in diagram B above. These Smṛtis varied from time to time in accordance to the different periods, namely Satya Yuga [period of truth]; Treta Yuga [period of upliftment of spiritual life-period of the appearance of Lord Ram]; Dwapara Yuga [period of duality where everything, both good and evil, is found in one, it is also the period of the appearance of Lord Krishna] and Kali Yuga [period of destruction]. As essential conditions changed, as various circumstances came to have their influence on the people, manners and customs had to be changed. These Smṛtis, as mainly regulating the manners and customs of the nation, had also to be changed from time to time. While some basic principles of the religion are considered eternal, those religious practices that were based entirely upon the social position and correlation had to change in accordance with societal changes (Vedalankar, 1981:21). Furthermore, various saints and Divine Incarnations at different times have appeared, played their individual roles ad enriched Hinduism with their teachings. By reinterpreting earlier scriptural texts, they have made the religion relevant to changed times and people.

Fifthly, the Vedas were considered so ‘sacred truths’ by the sages of yesteryear that for a long time they [sacred truths] were not put in writing. These [sacred truths] were preserved in memory and taught to deserving students through oral instruction (Swami Bhaskarananda, 1994: 11). Given that for many generations, the truths were passed on, it was possible that these truths could have been relayed according to the Guru’s [teacher] understanding and interpretation, which could have differed due to period of time, context or initial intended understanding.

Finally, amongst the myriad of scriptural texts, the Agamas, as depicted in diagram B above, consisted of manuals for worshipping the Supreme Being as understood separately by the various sects of Vainavism, Saivism and Saktism. Again, it is evident that different people within the fold of Hinduism could interpret the scriptures differently.
Hinduism, according to Bhaskarananda, purports that Man's quest to attain God Realisation can also be achieved through Yoga. In this instance, Yoga means a method or technique to establish mental communion with God (1974: 114). The four different paths of Yoga namely, Bhakti Yoga; Jnana Yoga; Raja Yoga and Karma Yoga caters for the four categories of man. Man, according to Bhaskarananda (1974: 115) can be broadly categorised as the emotional person; the rational person; the meditative person and the habitually overactive person. The Bhakti Yoga which means the 'path of devotion' is said to be suitable for the emotional while the Jnana Yoga which is the 'path of rational inquiry' serves the need of the rational person. The Raja Yoga, which leads to the 'path of mental concentration', satisfies the needs of the meditative individual and Karma Yoga which treads the 'path of right action' is said to be prescribed for the person naturally inclined towards activity or work. Since different sects interpreted the scriptures according to their own understanding and within a particular period of time, it stands to reason that there would be variations with regard to cultural practices, rituals and ceremonies performed during the time of death.

Whilst we have noted the various differences expressed by different scholars regarding the interpretation of Hindu scriptures, there does appear to be common ground on certain basic issues and essential principles regarding the theory of creation; God (Brahma); Law of Karma; the soul; Moksha (liberation or God Realisation); Reincarnation; Universalism; Image Worship; Divine Incarnation and Yoga. These essential principles and concepts will be further explained below.

2.4 THE HINDI PERSPECTIVE OF DEATH

According to the Hindu philosophy, each one is an eternal spiritual being. One's body is temporary and the body will eventually perish. The soul, a spiritual spark is the basic principle of any material body. It spreads its influence all over that body as consciousness. This consciousness is limited to a single body. According to the Hindu belief, the body perishes after death, but this is not the case of the soul. The soul in reality is beyond birth and death, its so-called 'birth' is entry into a body and its so-called death is its separation from that body. After it discards the body, the soul enters a new body in accordance to its actions. This cycle is known as
'rebirth' or 'reincarnation' and one of the main principles of the Hindu Religion [Dharma]. The principle of rebirth is tied up with the law of Action [Karma] which translates into the saying, "as you sow, so shall you reap" (Prabhupada, 1999: 8-10).

The Law of Karma holds that man suffers the consequences of his own actions. According to the Law of Karma, the individual is reincarnated either better or worst off than he was in his previous life. Actions in this world affect the status in the next. The status in this world is likely to be the result of actions in the last existence and so on. In other words, the soul carries with it the impression of its actions into the next life. This explains why children are born under varied conditions and circumstances. The belief is that a person is born into a state depending on his actions in his previous life. He reaps in his present life the fruit of his actions in the past life (Bhaskarananda, 1994: 80-83).

Some scriptures speak of the soul leaving the body through one 'chakra' or another, departing in a level of consciousness of a particular 'chakra' which then determines where in the inner worlds, a person will find himself after death. A chakra is described as the 'third channel inside the backbone of an individual which comprise of seven levels, each level is called a chakra. This channel is opened when the individual experiences spiritual awareness (Bhaskarananda, 1994: 129). Those who depart full of hatred go to the world of those who died in lower consciousness. Those with love in their hearts enter a world where others with similar attainment abide. At this juncture, whilst all Hindus believe in fact that the soul is eternal and will make a re-entry to earth, there appears to be various interpretations of when the soul reappears and what stages it[the soul] passes through before 're-entry' into this world. According to Bhaskarananda, when a person dies, his gross physical body is left behind and the soul with the subtle body, consisting of his mind, intellect, vital energy and his motor and sense organs, goes to different plane of existence. Such a plane of existence is called a Loka. A departed soul goes to a higher loka if his mind is pure, and to a relatively lower loka if it is not. As determined by his past karma, the departed soul remains in one of these lokas for a period of time, either suffering or enjoying there (1994: 93).
Vivekananda (1974:35) purports that ‘when a man dies, who has by meditation purified himself, and got knowledge, he first goes to light, then from light to day, from day to the light half of the moon, from that to the six months when the sun goes to the north, from that to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the lightning and when he comes to the sphere of lightning, he meets a person who is not human and that person leads him to [the conditioned] Brahman’. He goes on to say that ‘those who have not attained knowledge but has done good work, first go through smoke, then too night, then to the dark fifteen days, then to the six months when the sun goes to the south and from that they go the region of their forefathers, then to ether, then to the region of the moon and are born as gods and live there so long as their good works will permit. When the effect of their good work has finished, they come back to earth by the same route. Since there appears to be differences with regard to the different sects understanding of the route the soul takes and the duration thereof, it is clear that it will differences in the rituals and ceremonies and the period of mourning for the Hindi community.

In Hinduism, the main goal or supreme objective in life is to achieve eternal freedom from the shackles of earthly bondage and death through divine experience or God Realisation. This state of spiritual emancipation and eternal blessedness is termed Moksha.

Hindus traditionally cremate their dead, for swifter more complete release of the soul. To some extent, the funeral rites serve to notify the departed soul that he has, in fact, died (Bhaskarananda, 1994:4). It is possible, for a disoriented soul, not understanding that he is on the other side to linger closer to the physical plane. He can see this material world and even observe his own funeral. Some of the ritual chants address the deceased urging him to relinquish attachments and continue the journey. The rites are also for the living allowing the family to a respectable and dignified farewell, to express grief and emotions that they naturally encounter. The deepest significance of funeral rites lies in their yoking the inner and outer worlds and the recognition that a family consists not only of its living generations, but its ancestors as well. Often, a group of souls will incarnate into the same extended family, for example, a grandson may be the returned soul of the father. In this way, collective karma is worked through. Those living in the inner worlds help relatives living in the outer worlds. Rituals in Hinduism can serve as an entry point of the world of the spirit. Everyone who is born has to die some time or
another, but when the body dies, the soul does not. The soul is born again in another body. The mind and soul, together individualised in this fashion, go on from body to body again and again. This is the unique principle of transmigration. Mind clings to the soul in a subtle way throughout its transmigration. This mind accumulates memories, habits and impressions, which constitute the Impressions [Vasanas] of the mind or of the person to whom it clings for the moment. These Impressions [Vasanas] are the ones that give the individual his mental personality even before his upbringing in this life starts having an effect on him. It is something over which you have no control because it belongs to your past. This past determines your level of evolution as of now and also your tendencies for human behaviour. If they are bad, you have to contend with them and fight them. This is the meaning of Karma theory. Hinduism emphasizes basic virtues like purity, humility, self-control, truth, non-violence and detachment.

According to the scriptures, God is transcendental, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent and therefore by giving God any single name or form we are delimiting God’s omnipresence and transcendence. No name or form therefore will exclusively describe God and by that very reason, according to the Vedas, all names and forms suit God. Since the common mind of man cannot comprehend this abstractness and transcendence of the nameless and formless version of God, different idols and images enter the picture. These myriad symbols, images and idols are only symbols, images and idols and they are not substitutes for God.

According to Hinduism, the five elements, namely fire, water, earth, ether and wind are considered the ultimate purifiers of all things in the universe, Hindu tradition uses them effectively, for the purpose of purification, in all their rituals. Those used most frequently are water or fire.

2.4.1 THE RITUALS AND CEREMONIES PERFORMED DURING THE PERIOD OF GRIEVING/MOURNING

For the purposes of ensuring a comprehensive understanding of what occurs during and after the period of death in terms of cultural practices in the form of rituals and ceremonies, I will subdivide this section into stages, namely, at the time of death, on cremation and post cremation.
2.4.1.1 At the time of death

According to the Hindu philosophy, the body dies and the soul transmigrates. According to the Krishna Consciousness Movement (Prabhupada, 1999:22), just before a person dies, a last ritual called the ‘Antyesti-Kriya’ associated with the body is performed. This ritual is done to purify the body for the last time and is said to help the soul to become detached from the body. The soul is assisted in not taking a ghostly form and in moving on to a better situation. Mothilal and Maraj (1995:3) on the other hand purports that a dying man undergoes the journey of death in three stages. The first concerns the subtle body in transit, the second is that of ghosthood then after the performances of the Sapindikarana [final death rites], when he assumes the form of a pithri (ancestor).

Upon death, the body should be placed on a bed of Kusha grass [koos], thill [sesame] and jav. According to Mothilal and Maraj (1995:4), the head should face the east or north since this is the direction of the luminaries and sages. Thereafter an undertaker should be contacted to remove the body and prepare it for cremation. Whilst the Krishna Consciousness Movement (Prabhupada, 1999), makes no mention of the significance of the time of death, Mothilal and Maraj (1995: 5) asserts that on death of a person an astrologer should be contacted to determine the implication of the time of death. If a person passes on during a time considered inauspicious, then prescribed rites need to be performed. If these rites are not concluded, it is believed that sons and close relatives are affected.

At the time of death, according to Mothilal and Maraj (1995:6-7), the deceased assumes the form of Pretha-Ghosthood. The eldest son of the deceased should wash the corpse and embalm it in anticipation of the last rites. Sandal-paste and ghee [processed butter], mixed with thill is smeared on the body. This is said to protect the corpse against decomposition. Pancharatna or gold, Tulasi and Gangajal [water from the Ganges river] are placed in the mouth of the deceased. These objects incite devotion and help transport the devotee to the safe domain of Godhama. An earthenware lamp is lit at the head of the corpse. The lamp provides the deceased with light to encounter the great journey. The lamp is maintained for ten days after the death, burning both
day and night. This serves to remind mourners about the temporality of the body and the eternal nature of the soul (Mothilal & Maraj, 1995:6).

The priest proceeds to perform the Shraada, which is a ceremony performed only for the individual who has passed on and not for the ancestors. He [the priest] offers six shraadas [pindas – rice flour balls]. By these pindas, the departed soul attains fitness for becoming a mane [pithri]. The pindas are offered as follows, the first pinda is offered at the place of death, in the hands of the corpse. The second is placed at the door of the deceased’s house, this is called Pantha which means a passenger which refers to the deceased in the great journey. The third is placed at a crossroads, usually at the crematorium. The fourth is placed at the place of rest. The fifth is placed at the pyre or crematorium. The final one is placed at the collection rites and it is called Pretha. This serves to comfort the deceased. It is customary to offer six pindas collectively where two are offered at the home of the deceased and the additional four at the crematorium.

The Krishna Consciousness Movement (Prabhupada, 1999:24-34), purports that at the time of death, there should be no cooking in the home of the deceased. Relatives and friends are expected to provide simple meals and if one’s father, mother or spouse had died, one is expected to fast for three days. The preparation of the body for the funeral rites differ somewhat from that outlined above. When preparing the body, the following is done: the eyes should be closed; the limbs need to be straightened; the body is shaved and then bathed; sacred water in sprinkled on the body; ghee is smeared over the body and tilaka (powder) is applied to the body of deceased. Tulasi (slingerberry) beads are placed around the neck and the body is dressed in two pieces of cloth. Usually one uses silk, new clothes or the clothes in which the deceased was married. Furthermore, the person’s chanting beads (mala) should be placed in the right hand and a small piece of gold is placed in the mouth. The body is now ready to be returned to the home before being cremated. The body is brought in to the house, head first, and the coffin is placed on a straw mat or white calico. The head should point north and a ghee lamp is lit. Before the public pays their respects, some dry tulasi (slingerberry) twigs are placed around the body. An ‘offered’ tulasi leaf is placed in the mouth and the upper part of the body is covered in a cloth (chaddar). The body is further adorned with a flower garland and a dot is placed on the forehead
of the deceased. A spoonful of water is offered and the eldest son of the deceased should offer some incense to the body. Flower petals or pieces of sandalwood are placed on trays that are used as offerings for those that come to express their sympathy. The body lies in state for several hours before proceeding to the crematorium. At this point family members are allowed time to express their grief. Ten minutes are dedicated for scriptural reading.

2.4.1.2 On Cremation

For all Hindu deaths, a hearse leads the funeral procession to the crematorium. As outlined by Mothilal and Maraj (1995: 8-10), at the crematorium, the pallbearers lower the body five times, each time placing the corpse on the ground. This is a symbolic committing of the five building blocks of the universe namely ether, air, water, fire and earth to its subtle forms. This procedure reminds the mourners of the transient nature of life. In classical Hindu philosophy, it is maintained that the body is also not destroyed but is committed back to the five basic elements which helps to maintain balance.

If death was considered to have occurred during an inauspicious time, then at the time of offering the six pindas, five effigies are made out of kusha and cremated along with the deceased. This is said to protect the sons and relatives against misfortune. Thill/mustard is also strewn while transporting the corpse to the crematorium. This wards off unwelcome Prethas. After delivering the funeral sermon, the body is disposed off in one of three means, namely by fire (Agni daha), burial (Bhumi daha) or water (Jal daha) (Mothilal & Maraj, 1995:10). In most instances, fire is considered the most efficient since fire has the ability to incinerate all germs and bacteria. This prevents the spread of epidemics, which can result in contamination of the soil and water. A havan (prayer with fire) is offered for the destruction of the physical body. Circumbulation of the corpse takes place seven times in an anti clockwise direction. The touching of the mouth with fire takes place. If the deceased is a female, then the fire begins at her feet. The corpse is consigned to the fire and is reduced to ash.

The mourners should take a bath and should engage in purificatory rites. The son should make the first offering of thillanjali [water and sesame] to the deceased. He should offer water with
Kusha three or ten times. The ash should be placed in an earthenware pot and immersed in the river or sea. This aids the deceased in negating negative karmas. Those who return from the crematorium should undergo ablutions and purification by touching fire, metal, weapon, water or any auspicious object before entering the dwelling.

For the Krishna Consciousness Movement (Prabhupada, 1999: 34-39), a man sprinkling water leads the procession into the crematorium. The coffin is suitably placed for mourners to offer their final respect. Mourners file past, offering some flower petals or pieces of sandalwood. The priest recites prayers of glorification of the Lord and some family member or friend may pay tribute to the deceased. The priest often elaborates on the specific purpose of human life and the nature of the soul, which aims to give comfort to the bereaved family. The coffin then moves into the cremation chamber where the son the deceased performs the last rites. The last rites entail, placing sandalwood in the mouth, the chest, the abdomen, and the feet of the deceased. A piece of camphor is placed on the top of each pile of sandalwood and a prayer is recited. The son then lights the camphor and walks three times around the coffin in an anti-clockwise direction. The chief mourner (son) then touches the flame to the camphor starting at the chest, then the abdomen and finally the feet. The coffin is then pushed into the incinerator while the priest chants a prayer. The ashes are available within a few hours and are collected in an earthen pot which is placed on a white calico. The ashes are filled into the pot and any excess ashes are collected in the same cloth. The pot is covered with an earthen lid and the cloth is wrapped into a bundle. The ashes are now ready to be disposed of in the river or sea. The family then goes to the chosen site to dispose of the ashes. The chief mourner faces the north and takes some water into the joint palms. A prayer is offered and the water is dropped through the fingertips. He then takes the cloth with the earthen pot and enters further into the water. Whilst chanting certain prayers, he undoes the bundle and submerges it into the water. The chief mourner then moves out of the water and is not allowed to look back.

2.4.1.3 Post death Rites

Mothilal and Maraj (1995:11), express that the son should establish the earthenware lamp in a clean room. He should also confine himself to this room for nine days and nights, maintaining
the lamp, the symbol of the soul. The performer of the ceremonies should observe celibacy and sleep on the floor. No shaving or clipping of nails should take place. No pungent or saline food should be taken. Boiled or steamed food is easily digested and does not impede the health of the grieving individuals. Food should only be offered and eaten with immediate relatives. During the mourning period of ten days, the family should request the services of a learned individual who will deliver a discourse based on the Holy Scriptures. These talks would serve to alleviate sorrow, discoursing on the temporality of time and the unsubstantial nature of the universe.

The rites that are observed after the cremation prepare the soul for the great journey. During the ten days, water offerings, mild and food (boiled rice) should be offered daily. The son and relatives should shave their heads, beards, and moustache, pare nails and undergo ablutions. Thus all physical signs of defilement should be abandoned. The removal of one's hair denotes the fallen state of the mourner on the loss of a dear one. The removal of the hair at the time of death indicates that the individual is in mourning. Ten pindas are offered during the ten days or collectively on the tenth day at a riverbank. By the offering of pindas, the departed soul assumes a new astral body fit for aerial travel. With the recital of the name and lineage of the departed, the ten pindas should be offered along with flowers and incense. By offering the ten pindas, during the ten days, the soul acquires a new body just as the fetus does in the womb after ten months. An earthenware pot of water, milk and sesame is established on a tripod together with a lamp. This provides sustenance for the astral body. The gift of a lamp helps to illuminate the path of the deceased.

On the twelfth or thirteenth day according to Mothilal and Maraj (1995: 13), depending on the sex of the departed, sixteen additional pindas are offered. This ceremony marks the uniting of the deceased with the manes or ancestors. It is believed that death overtakes an individual unsuspectingly leaving little or no time to fulfill his or her obligations or desires on earth. This ceremony affords the deceased the opportunity to expedite all unfulfilled desires. Initially, the final ceremony was performed on the twelfth month and during this time all auspicious celebrations were forbidden. However, this has changed. Some scriptures directs that this ceremony be done on the twelfth day irrespective of the sex of the departed while others propagate the performance on either the twelfth day, for women, or thirteenth day, for men. By
the performance of this ceremony, the departed soul is released from ghosthood and acquires the status of ancestor. The soul travels through sixteen cities or disciplines, which refines and purifies it [the soul]. After a year, the journey is completed and re-incarnation takes place according to the merits and demerits of the departed. Thereafter the six monthly and the annual ceremonies are undertaken. The yearly ceremony is undertaken a few weeks before the anniversary of the death because one month in the cosmic life of the deceased expires on the eleventh day after death.

The Krishna Consciousness Movement (Prabhupada, 1999: 40-42), on the other hand, purports that the post death period can be regarded as a period of contamination. For these people[Krishna Consciousness Movement], when death occurs, the immediate family members undergo a period of contamination (asauca). This impurity is said to be due to the psychic unbalancing caused by the death of the family member. According to the understanding, there is still an emotional continuity with the psychic ties of the deceased. Asauca is obligatory for all the blood relations of the deceased. The days of asauca differ in number depending on one’s caste, age and sex. The younger the age of the deceased, the shorter the period of impurity for the family. The same rule applies for females. The length of thirteen days is merely a guideline. In reality, caste and regional customs vary enormously in the complex Indian social environment.

Death occurring in infancy guarantees a human rebirth and the mourning period is very brief. During the contamination period, one offers water to the deceased each day. The eldest son prays for the posthumous peace of the deceased. Some sesame seeds are put into a dish of water. It is said that sesame seeds have the power of consuming the faults of the deceased and opening the doors of Pitrloka (location of the ancestors). A prayer is offered and water is scooped into the cup of the joined palms. With a gesture of offering, one raises one’s hands, calling aloud the name of the deceased. The water is then poured out through the space between the thumb and the forefinger.

The karma accumulated by any person is the determining factor after death. Nevertheless, once the period of contamination is over, a programme is organised to honour the deceased person. These ceremominal practices are offered to help the soul to cut off present material ties and to
move on to a better situation. The common practice is that a feast is held in the soul's honour, normally on the thirteenth day. In preparation for the ceremonial celebration, the following is done. The house is thoroughly cleaned and purified and an altar is set up. Thereafter, preparations are made to have a pinda (rice flour balls) ceremony where a variety of food is specially prepared. These include, small balls of rice, cooked in milk with sesame, ghee and honey. The family then proceeds to conduct a pooja (prayer) where an offering of food is made. In addition, a Yajna [fire sacrifice] may also be performed. This fire sacrifice is an invocation of auspiciousness and purification and is best done at noon. This prayer is conducted by the priest is followed by the singing of hymns by everyone present. This is done to conclude the ceremony. Food, that has been cooked as offering [prasadam], to the deceased and the ancestors should be offered by the eldest son before a picture of the deceased. The host must ensure that the priest and others in attendance of the ceremony are served prashadam.

2.5 THE COUNSELLORS' PERSPECTIVES ON GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

There are many theories available on grief and bereavement counselling that enrich the way psychologists view people's grief, and which give them [psychologists], therapeutic tools to work with such issues. Since an elaboration on every model is beyond the scope of this study, I Humanistic Person-Centred Approaches since the two are found on the extreme ends of the continuum of therapeutic approaches. The researcher subscribes more to the Humanistic Person-Centred approach since it fits will highlight different models but will describe in detail that of the Psychoanalytical and adequately into the paradigm of constructivism, a paradigm on which this research rests. This paradigm alludes to the notion of multiple realities where cultural practices are an expression of particular individuals. I will begin by highlighting the various models of Kubler Ross (1970), Parkes (1986) and Rando (1973).

Firstly, according to Parkes (1986), there are five specific but overlapping phases of grief each with a number of related feelings. These are numbness; yearning; disorganisation; despair; and reorganisation. The related feelings range from shock and denial, disbelief and disorganisation through anger and guilt. This is followed by loneliness and fear, helplessness and depression and finally to an eventual acceptance and relief (Wass, 1979: 175).
Secondly, Kubler Ross (1970) asserts that the grieving process entails five emotional stages, which includes denial; anger; bargaining; depression; and acceptance. Denial together with feeling of isolation is considered a healthy initial response to an uncomfortable and painful situation as it allows the client to mobilise other more adaptive strategies. Anger sees the client often feeling envious of and resentful towards those who have not experienced a loss. Bargaining on the other hand results in the client wanting to exchange places or wanting more time to ‘make up’ or ‘catch up’ on unfinished business. Depression can occur once the client can no longer deny the loss and rage together with bargaining are replaced by a sense of loss. Finally, the reality of the situation has been faced, raged over, bargained with, mourned and eventually accepted. It is an experience of completion, achievement or preparedness for what lies beyond. It can also be described as a state of calm and self-containment (Poss, 1982:12-21).

Thirdly Rando (1993:255) describes the mourning period as comprising of the ‘Six R’ processes of uncomplicated mourning that are necessary for the healthy accommodation of loss. These are: recognising the loss; reacting to the separation; recollecting and experiencing the deceased and the relationship; relinquishing the old attachments; revising one’s assumptive world by developing an altered relationship with the deceased; and reinvesting in a new relationship or a life without the deceased. According to Rando (1993:254) the symptoms of complicated mourning are “any psychological, behavioural or social manifestation of compromise, distortion or failure of any one or more of the “Six R” processes of mourning that would then require different interventions on the part of the therapist.

2.5.1 A Psychoanalytical Approach

According to Worden a proponent of psychoanalysis, death represents a loss and resulting deprivation- it is this loss, which causes us to grieve, and, through grieving, to come to terms with that loss, to accept it and to learn to live without the person we loved. He believes that every bereavement will affect the bereaved differently. The duration and intensity of the various symptoms are influenced by a variety of factors. These include: - a) previous experiences of bereavement; b) how one handled previous life crises; c) the relationship and degree of attachment between the deceased and the bereaved; d) the circumstances surrounding the death;
e) the quality of support given by family, friends or church; f) the degree of personal faith in
God, as they understand him/her/it; g) the intensity of any consequential problems which arise
after the death such as the outcomes of a will, assets being frozen or family feuds; h) the personal
characteristics/traits of the bereaved; i) physical and mental strength before the bereavement; j)
whether the cause of death is ‘sanctioned’ by society; and k) whether or not the relationship
between the deceased and the survivor is ‘sanctioned’ by society (1991:10-18).

Worden further purports that mourning comprises four tasks or phases, which must be
accomplished before re-establishment, can take place and mourning is completed. These are, the
acceptance of the reality of loss; experiencing of the pain and grief; the adjustment to an
environment in which the deceased is missing; the withdrawal of emotional energy; and
reinvestment of this energy in another relationship.

Acceptance of the reality of the loss stresses that even when death is expected, there is still a
sense of it not having really happened. Considering this, it is vital that the bereaved come to the
reality that the person is dead and will not be returning. Often, the opposite of this task, which is
denial, occurs and this causes people to get stuck in this first task which leads to complicated
grief. While mummification of the deceased’s belongings in the short term is not unusual, it is
considered denial when it continues for years. Other forms of denial include denying the
meaning of loss. By doing this, the loss is seen as less significant. People go to the opposite
extreme of mummification and remove everything that reminds them of the deceased. Accepting
the reality of a loss takes time because it involves an acceptance on an intellectual level as well
as an emotional one. It is believed that traditional rituals such as funerals aid with the completion
of this task since a funeral helps the bereaved to move towards acceptance.

To work though the pain of grief helps to get the grief work done, therefore anything that hinders
the bereaved from reaching the pain prolongs the course of mourning. Grief counselling aims to
help people through this difficult time. The inadequate completion of this task may lead to
extensive therapy later. Once an individual has worked through the pain, he or she is now ready
to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing. The adjustment to a new
environment is dependent on two factors. The relationship that one shared with the deceased and
the various roles that the deceased played. According to Worden (1991:18) regression can occur as a result of bereavement because the person feels that they are too helpless, inadequate and incapable to fill the deceased's role. When this sense of lowered self-esteem occurs, people challenge their personal efficacy and begin attributing change not to their own strengths and abilities but to chance or fate. These negative images usually, over time, give way to more positive ones and the survivors begin to learn new ways to deal with the world and continue with their tasks.

In the process of adjusting to an environment without the deceased, it is essential that the bereaved emotionally relocates the deceased and move on with life. For the bereaved, mourning ends when the mourner no longer needs to reactivate the representation of the dead with exaggerated intensity in the course of daily living. The counsellor's responsibility is to help the bereaved find an appropriate place for the deceased in their emotional life, and not to help the bereaved forget about their relationship with the deceased. This task is hindered when the bereaved person holds onto past attachment instead of going on and forming new ones. The successful completion of these four tasks allows for uncomplicated grieving. If the completion of any one of these tasks is hindered it could result in abnormal grief reactions.

Finally the overall goal of grief counselling according to Worden ((1991:28) is to help the survivor complete unfinished business with the deceased and to be able to say a final good-bye. There are specific goals that correspond to the four tasks of mourning. These are 1) to increase the reality of the loss; 2) to help the bereaved deal with both expressed and latent affect; 3) to help the bereaved overcome various impediments to readjustment after the loss; and 4) to encourage the bereaved to say an appropriate goodbye and to feel comfortable re-investing back into life.

2.5.2 A Humanistic-Person Centred Approach

Carl Rogers was the psychologist who introduced the person-centred approach to psychotherapy. Initially Roger's was labeled a 'non-directive' therapist. At a later stage, this evolved into 'client-centred' or 'person-centred' therapy because of the emphasis on the internal world of the client.
Roger’s believed that authority about client’s lives rested in the people themselves rather than in the outside expert or psychotherapist. The role of the therapist was to provide a safe place where clients could explore their own resources for self-understanding and for self-directed behaviour.

According to Carl Roger’s approach to counselling, the counsellor is a companion, alongside his or her clients, psychologically entering their perceptual world while allowing the client to determine the agenda. The approach to bereavement counselling aims at developing a confidential and trusting relationship by being aware, open, sensitive, attentive, and interested in the clients. While it focuses on the client’s needs and agendas, it recognises that all therapists and counsellors have some influence over their clients. It tries to minimise its power in the client-centred relationship. This means that it does not use this influence to change thoughts, feelings or behaviour. Rogers believed that conveying empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard and congruence are essential elements in the establishment of a trusting therapeutic relationship.

Empathic understanding helps clients feel understood and not judged. During the counselling process, it is often useful to share information that can normalise the client’s experiences. Some theorist would argue that normalising a client’s experience disempowers the person, as the therapist is assuming a position of authority. This may sometimes be true, but normalising is a skill that extrapolates from others’ experiences and helps clients to feel less isolated by the sharing of the universal experience of grief (Egan 2002: 97).

Unconditional positive regard conveys feelings of accepting the client as she or he is. This opens up the possibility of clients expressing alien thoughts, feelings and experiences of grief. Since unconditional positive regard implies no judgement, it does not imply approval nor does it encourage a client to be one way or another, it merely implies that the therapist accepts the bereaved person’s reality as it is (Egan 2002: 97).

Congruence involves the therapist as a ‘real’ person, not as a blank screen encouraging transference, nor as an expert with a repertoire of therapeutic techniques. This realness also implies that the therapist does not ‘hide behind’ a set of theories, but rather uses theory to guide
understanding. According to the client-centred approach to bereavement counselling, the purpose of grief is to enable the bereaved to integrate the loss into their lives in whatever way feels right for them. People grieve differently and the uniqueness of experience is influenced by the relationship with the deceased, whether the death was sudden or anticipated, and other factors such as the person's personality, age, experience, history and coping mechanisms. Therefore, people will integrate the loss into their lives in very different ways.

Many clients will experience the thoughts, feelings and behaviours as described by conventional models of grief, however, the client-centred bereavement counsellor helps the client establish their own appropriate goals to work towards rather than setting goals for the client based on theories. According to Klass, Silverman and Nickman (1996:35), the pain of grief never goes away completely and detaching from the deceased is seldom the purpose of grieving. They (Klass et al) propose that the bereaved need to continue the relationship or bond with the deceased and that helping a client to sustain the bond may be a purpose of bereavement counselling.

Many models such as those purported by Kubler Ross (1970), Rando (1994) and Worden (1991), imply that the first step to healing is for the person to accept the reality of the loss. It is often observed that the bereaved may struggle for a very long time and some may never accept the reality of death. Klass (1996) suggests that they do not deny the physical death rather their continuing bond is with an inner representation of the deceased (Klass et.al, 1996). The pressure placed on the bereaved by society to 'move on', 'accept' or 'get over', adds immeasurable stress to the experience of the bereaved. It is generally by holding on, continuing the bond, and reestablishing the relationship with the deceased that the intensity of the loss is reduced.

The client-centred therapists are not prescriptive in their expectations about how long the grieving process will go on. It continues according to the needs of the clients and therapy is available to them for as long as it is needed. Accordingly, clients who come for counselling years after the death is not judged as a 'pathological griever' nor is the concept of complicated bereavement entertained. The approach moves from an understanding that grief work is complex and complicated and that because of the uniqueness of human beings their grieving processes
will have marked differences. A major difference in grieving is the time it takes for each individual. Proponents of the client-centred approach does not subscribe to the idea of helping people to achieve ‘resolution’ or ‘closure’, but rather that they journey with them to a point where they no longer need additional support from the therapist or counsellor.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The literature review has attempted to examine the concepts of bereavement, grief and mourning as well as those of rituals and ceremonies. The chapter had provided a concise overview of the Hindu religion together with its basic tenets which forms the foundation of the religion. The significance of the ceremonies and rituals performed by the Hindu community in Lenasia has been explored and described and the various models of grief counselling models employed by contemporary psychotherapists have been examined. Chapter three will now examine the research design and process of inquiry.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the research design and the research methods that will be used in this study. The research design, methods of data collection and data processing techniques will be outline. The issues of trustworthiness (validity and reliability) as well as credibility and ethical considerations of the research inquiry will be addressed.

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is two-fold. In the first place, this study is done to explore and describe the various rituals and ceremonies performed during the period of mourning by the Hindi speaking community in Lenasia. Then, based on the results and data of this research, guidelines on how some of these practices could be incorporated into the counselling process will be described for educational psychologists.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Burns and Grove (1999:185) a research design is a blueprint for conducting a study that maximises control over factors that could interfere with the validity of findings. A research design must be developed specifically for the study that is going to be undertaken.

A qualitative research design, which is contextual, explorative and descriptive in nature (Wilson, 1989:15), will be used.

3.3.1 Qualitative

The researcher's choice and action during the research (De Vos, 1998: 80), determines the
qualitative design. The researcher works with a wealth of rich descriptive data collected in the research by in-depth interviewing. The interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim and a document analysis will take place. In the qualitative design, a more holistic and interpretative method leads to an insider perspective (Mouton, 1996:169). In this study, the focus lies on the rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi speaking community in Lenasia during the period of mourning. The researcher will ask questions to reveal what the different practices entail. For the purpose of this research, the collection of data will provide the researcher with the rich narrative of the various rituals and ceremonies. The data collected will be used as a basis from where the researcher will extract themes.

3.3.2. Contextual

This research study is of a contextual nature (De Vos, 1998:281) since it studies the various rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi community in Lenasia during their period of grieving. The focus of study being “a naturally occurring, ordinary event, in a natural surrounding (that will give one) a strong handle on what real life is like” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10)

3.3.3. Explorative

According to Mouton and Marais (1996:15) the goal of exploratory studies is the exploration of a relatively unknown research area. Due to the sparse information available in this field of research, the researcher will work from a position of not knowing. This will enhance the broadness of information collected from the respondents. The researcher’s aim in this study, is to gain a deeper insight into the various rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking community in Lenasia during the period of grieving. By asking open-ended questions and exploring this unknown field of rituals and ceremonies, the researcher will be able to collect information that will contribute to this study

3.3.4 Descriptive
The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the various rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking community in Lenasia during the period of grieving. This focus will guide the study and the questions posed to those that had lost a significant other through death or those who had performed the ceremonies. Data will be collected from face-to-face in-depth interviews that are tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Open-ended questions will be used and will be directed towards uncovering the significance and relevance of these rituals for those grieving or those performing the ceremonies. In the analysis of the data, attention will be given to the researcher-subject interaction, separation of themes and construction of a unified description of the processes as experienced by the subjects ((Miles & Huberman, 1994: 19)

3.4 THE RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research is phenomenological in that it describes in detail the personal experiences of the individuals who had performed the various rituals and ceremonies during the period of grieving. It also emphasises the “meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). Phenomenological research strives to describe human experiences at their deepest level. For the researcher investigating the phenomenon of rituals and ceremonies and their significance in the healing process, the personal feelings, emotional manifestations and effects on those grieving can be captured, examined and explored. This correlates with Miles and Huberman’s (1994:166) assertion that phenomenological research is concerned primarily with the meaning of an experience for people.

According to Merriam (1998:5-16) it is suggested that there are certain preconditions for this type of qualitative research. Firstly that the research design is exploratory, in that the researcher identifies recurring themes and patterns. Through the literature review and the interviews with the various individuals all those themes that appear to be common will be categorised and analysed to ascertain a pattern, which may exist. Secondly, it is inductive in nature, in that the researcher hopes to gain new insights that could be applied to the field under investigation. By conducting this study, the information obtained will be used to provide educational psychologists
with guidelines for conducting therapy with clients from the Hindi speaking community. Thirdly, it is deductive in that the literature in the field provides the framework to study and verify existing research. Initially all literature that covers this area of interest will be accessed and recorded. This will provide the researcher with a solid understanding of what is available and where the gaps exist. Fourthly, it is bounded to a particular context, situation or system in which the researcher attempts to understand as an insider and then convey this understanding to outsiders. By confining this study to the Hindi-speaking community in Lenasia, it will be possible to contextualise the findings as well as generalise some of the practices to the broader Hindi community. Fifthly, it is holistic (Merriam, 1998:134), in that the phenomenon is understood in its totality. The rituals and ceremonies will be placed within the broader spectrum of religious doctrines and cultural practices. Finally, it is a naturalistic inquiry, in that the researcher attempts to understand the phenomenon in its natural surroundings. Participants will be interviewed in their own environment which is surrounded by artefacts used in the various rituals and ceremonies. Furthermore, some of them will be observed whilst performing certain rituals associated with death.

This research will be sub-divided into two phases. In the first phase, there will be an exploration and description of the various rituals and ceremonies performed by individuals from the Hindi-speaking community during the period of grieving as well as the various models of grief counselling employed in contemporary psychotherapy. Following this, in the second phase, there will be a description of the guidelines for educational psychologists involved in the counselling of clients from the Hindi-speaking community. In these two phases, the final responsibility lies with the researcher for taking ethical decisions in order to ensure successful research.

3.4.1 Ethical measures

The following ethical aspects will be taken into consideration:

3.4.1.1 Competency of the researcher

It is the ethical obligation of the researcher to ensure competence (De Vos, 1998: 31). As an
intern psychologist, the researcher has skills in counselling and psychotherapy which are necessary to be able to conduct research of a very sensitive nature, in this case, the grief experienced by individuals who had lost significant others through death.

3.4.1.2 Researcher – respondent relationship

Veracity
The respondent will be informed about the methods that will be used in this research, namely tape-recording. The researcher will adhere to rules of confidentiality in this procedure.

Fidelity
The researcher has an obligation to remain faithful to her commitment, which includes keeping promises, maintaining confidentiality and demonstrating caring behavior (Merriam 1998:38). The researcher will encourage respondents to take part in the research and reduce resistance as far as possible by an open and “not knowing” attitude. She will inform them about her credentials and the proposed aim of this research.

Participation

The subjects will be assured that they could withdraw from the interview or study at any time.

3.4.1.3 Selected sample

The researcher will inform the respondents of the reasons why they have been purposely selected for this study. The reasons include that they have the most comprehensive understanding of the phenomena and that they meet the research criteria. According to Merriam, “sampling in field research involves the selection of a research site, time, people and events” (1998: 60). In this qualitative study the sampling strategy is a non-probability one. This aims at gaining an understanding or insight of a particular phenomenon under investigation, by using a represented sample rather than quantifying results by using a large number of samples. LeCompt and Priessle (1992) refers to nonprobability sampling as criterion-based selection where the researcher
establishes the criterion to be investigated and then purposefully sets out to select the sample of the study that matches the criteria to be measured (Frankel, 1997:61). Phenomenological researchers, according to LeCompt and Priessle (1992), choose participants “purposefully in order that they may increase the utility of the information derived from their sample” (Frankel, 1997:30). In the case of this study, the individuals who were asked to participate were chosen because they were likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon that the researcher was studying.

3.4.1.4 Restoration of participants

The researcher will handle the termination and withdrawal from the research with sensitivity and if debriefing is necessary, help the respondents to work through their experiences and its aftermath as to reduce any possible harm that may have been done (De Vos, 1998:34)

3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

When using qualitative research as a format of investigation, the researcher is not bound to any one particular method of collecting data. Researchers can make use of a number of different sources including observation, interviews, audio and visual recordings and questionnaires. Data collection in this instance is not about quantifying results but rather about describing a particular phenomenon or event and discovering meaning with the intention of interpreting, theorising or applying to the field that which been discovered or described (Merriam, 1998:6)

As a researcher who became the filter through whom the content is interpreted, I had to suspend judgements and preconceptions, and had to concentrate on the descriptions of the different rituals and ceremonies and their significant within the context of grieving. By so doing I hoped to be able to gain a “holistic integrated overview of the context under study; its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:6). In order to ensure triangulation Denzin (1970), suggests “using multiple sources of data or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998:204), a number of methods of data collection were used:
before the data was collected, a literature review was done. This served to anchor the research study in scientific truth and provided the foundation and framework within which to work. In addition, audio recordings of the individual in-depth interviews were made. These were then transcribed verbatim and later analysed. The emphasis throughout being on both the verbal and non-verbal cues of the respondents. Furthermore, observations of that which was seen and heard were enhanced by the use of notations and field notes. The field notes, for example, reflect my personal feelings on a metacognitive level of the particular interview situation. I made use of field notes throughout the study but these were not interpreted.

3.5.1 The Literature Review

A literature review, according to Merriam (1998: 55), “integrates, synthesises and critiques the important thinking and research on a particular topic”. This then serves to provide the researcher with both a foundation as well as a framework of previously published information and opinion on the problem under investigation. Findings of a study could be compared to that which has already been written, researched and interpreted accordingly.

The literature review in this study is both inductive and deductive in nature. It is inductive in that the research builds on theories, concepts and hypotheses presented in the literature, and deductive in that it tests theory by applying it to the research field.

The literature review of this study is presented in chapter two. It was conducted at the beginning of the study. It began with a broad investigation of the concepts of culture, rituals and ceremonies as well as the Hindu perspective on death. It then moved on to outline the different models of grief counselling in contemporary psychotherapy. The literature review in chapter two serves to integrate, synthesise and critique the important thinking and research of this particular study (Merriam 1998:55). For the purpose of facilitating an understanding the terminology used in the various rituals and ceremonies, explanations or English equivalents of many of the terms used in Hindi has been provided in brackets alongside the word.
3.5.2 Secondary Sources of Data

There are secondary sources of data used to validate the primary data sources as already described. It is necessary, for example, that non-verbal cues and subtle nuances be recorded as field notes to add to the information that may be obtained in interviewing. Throughout the investigation, observations of what I saw, heard, experienced, thought of and reflected on at a metacognitive level were recorded in the form of detailed field notes. It was these reflections that led to my understanding of the need to conduct another interview to test the information I was receiving since there appeared to be tremendous difficulty in trying to understand the process from the perspective of the priest who was initially interviewed. While field notes may vary, Merriam (1998:104) asserts that the content of field notes includes time, place and purpose of the observation as well as the verbal descriptions of the setting, the activities and the people. They may include direct quotes and observer comments are the researcher’s feelings, hunches, reactions or working hypothesis. I view the comments on the process of analysing my data, as well as the personal grappling and reflections in my professional journal, as field notes in that they refer directly to the study. The field notes, in the case of this research, were a supportive source of data and were not analysed in detail, although they may be useful for later data interpretation.

3.5.3 Interviews

An interview, according to Merriam, (1998:71) "is a conversation, but a conversation with a purpose". In qualitative research, the interview can take the form of a person-to-person, individual or group interview. For the purposes of this research, the person-to-person and individual interviews will be conducted. In these interviews, the researcher attempts to understand another person’s thoughts, feelings, perceptions and ideas by entering his world and thereby gaining an understanding of his personal perspective and paradigm. In order to gain this understanding, semi-structured interviews with individuals who had performed these ceremonies will be conducted. The first interviews will be with individuals who had performed these ceremonies due to the death of significant others. Another semi-structured interview with a priest who conducts these rituals and ceremonies and a final semi-structured interview with a Hindi-speaking psychologist who had counselled clients during the mourning process.
The first semi-structured long interview was held with a male elder who had lost his wife through cancer. It was held at his home on Monday 6 January 2003. The interview was audio taped. Detailed biographical information is presented in chapter four.

The interview was semi-structured because it was neither a conversation nor a response to a closed questionnaire. I had designed a number of questions aimed at eliciting the individual knowledge, opinions, understanding and feelings over the rituals and ceremonies performed during the period of grieving.

The semi-structured in-depth interview with the psychologist was slightly different since this one aimed at eliciting information on how these various rituals and ceremonies could be used in the process of grief counselling. I attempted to continuously reflect on my own prejudices and biases borne out of ignorance of both the religion and the culture.

The content of the interview was transcribed verbatim and became a starting point for the analysis of the data for the research. Examples of the different questions used in the semi-structured interview are:

1. What rituals or cultural practices were you expected to perform immediately after the death of your wife/husband/child/mother/father?
2. What are some of the other rituals/cultural practices carried out during the time of mourning? How long did these last? Who is expected to be a part thereof?
3. Do you believe that performing these practices were necessary or helpful? Explain.
4. What is the significance of these practices? (priest)
5. How do you incorporate the rituals/cultural practices in your practice? (psychologist)
6. Is there anything else you would like to share before closing?

Kvale (1983), describes the main aspects of the qualitative research interview as the following: it is centred on the interviewee’s life-world and seeks to understand the meaning of phenomena in
this life-world. In addition, the research is qualitative, descriptive specific and presuppositionless while it focuses on certain themes. It is also open to ambiguities and is subject to changes. Furthermore, since it takes place as an interpersonal interaction, it depends on the sensitivity of the interviewer and may result in a positive experience (Frankel, 1997:35). I attempted to ensure all of the above mentioned aspects were fulfilled, in varying degrees, in the interviews conducted.

The researcher will also use strategies like motivation, stimulation, probing and focussing to collect relevant data. Field notes will be necessary for additional information since these will provide the researcher information grounded on what is said in the interview as well as what is observed. Therefore in establishing trustworthiness, the researcher will include the use of techniques like a journal for reflecting information, about the self and the method of research, on a daily basis (Guba & Lincoln, 1998:327). These methods will allow the researcher the opportunity to get a greater insight into the various rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi community during the period of grieving, their understanding of these and its significance. Being part of the observation as much as the interview, the researcher will also use the strategy of reflection in her interaction with the respondents to be aware of her own reactions and feelings in the interaction.

3.6 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data collection and data analysis cannot be seen as two separate entities since they occur simultaneously and it is an ongoing process (Merriam, 1998: 163). These activities begin as early as the first thought of the topic and the refinement thereof. It proceeds through the literature review, the selection of the sample, the formulation of the research question and the decision as to the data collection methods to be employed. This process of data analysis aims at selecting, focussing, simplifying, abstracting and integrating one’s data (Frankel, 1997:38). The data collected by tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim and analysed after completion of each taped interview. The recording will be played back and the respondent will be asked to comment on the interview.

Field notes will contribute additionally to the meaning and interpretation of the analysis.
Tesch’s eight steps (De Vos, 1998: 343) will be used in the analysis of this study: the researcher will start by getting a sense of the whole by reading all the transcriptions carefully and jotting important ideas down what come to mind. Initially, one interview will be selected. In this interview, the researcher will focus on the underlying meaning of the information. Thoughts that come up will then be written in the margin. After a few interviews have been completed in this manner, the researcher will make a list of all the topics. Similarity in topics will lead to grouping them together in columns and arranging them into major topics, unique topics and leftovers.

With this list, the researcher will go back to the data. The topics will then be abbreviated as codes and the codes written next to the appropriate segments of the text. This can lead to new categories and codes. The researcher will then focus on the most descriptive wording for the topics and turn them into categories. She will then group the topics together that relate to each other. Lines may be drawn to show the interrelationship between these categories. The researcher will then make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and code them alphabetically. The data material belonging to each category will be assembled in one place and a preliminary analysis will be performed. Existing data will then be recorded at the end of the steps.

When constructing categories during the process of analysing the content, the researcher will use the following considerations as outlined in Merriam (1998:183) as guidelines. The researcher will reflect on the purpose of the research; attempt to be exhaustive; ensure that the themes are mutually exclusive; independent and derived from a single classification principle.

3.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In a qualitative research, it is vital that the researcher is accountable for the results derived from the study. This accountability is established through validity, reliability and trustworthiness. According to Merriam (1998:198), “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. Validity and reliability are achieved through careful attention to a study’s conceptualisation and the way in which data is collected, analysed and interpreted” (Merriam, 1998:199).
3.7.1 Internal and External Validity

According to Merriam (1998: 201), "validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality". Since reality in essence is both subjective and multidimensional, it is important to ensure that standards are set to assess whether this study can be considered valid. For this purpose the five steps outlined by Eisenhart and Howe (1992) will be used. The researcher will ensure that there be a fit between one's research questions, data collecting procedures and analysis techniques as well as having credible reasons for selecting a specific group of subjects, using specific data gathering procedures and analysis techniques. In addition, the researcher will strive to be alert to, and coherence with, prior knowledge derived from a comprehensive literary review and ensure that there are value constraints in terms of the usefulness of the study and the risks involved. This addresses the issue of both the usefulness of the particular research, as well as ethical considerations towards the participants. Finally, the researcher will seek to ensure that the project is comprehensive in terms of clarity, coherence and competence and that there is an application of all five of these standards throughout the project (Frankel, 1997:39).

To ensure that validity and trustworthiness is achieved, the following strategies are employed. Triangulation, as described earlier, where the researcher uses multiple data collection methods, data sources and analysts to check validity of the findings. The different sources of data collection included four in-depth interviews; these included different people coming from different perspectives and serving different roles during the process of grieving of the Hindi community. In addition, member checking which refers to the participants reviewing the research to determine accuracy and completeness. Given this, the participants will be requested to view the transcripts and the chapter on the dissemination of the data and to comment on the findings and themes. Furthermore, colleagues will also be asked to comment on the findings as they emerge. This peer examination will serve both a critical and a supportive function. Finally, establishing a chain of evidence between the research questions, the methodology employed the raw data and the findings of the study. This implies that those who read this study would see a coherent thread running through as well as determine whether the conclusions that I have offered are logical.
3.7.2 Reliability

Guba & Lincoln (1985) refer to reliability as the extent that one’s findings can be replicated. Since qualitative research cannot guarantee that identical results will be obtained in all situations, the researcher will instead regard the data as being dependable and consistent (Merriam 1998: 206). To ensure a degree of dependability and consistency of the data collected, the researcher’s position which seeks to explain the researcher’s assumption and metatheory regarding the study, the basis for selecting the participants, and the social context from which the data was collected will be explored. In addition, this will be enhanced by the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis that will be used (Merriam, 1998:207).

3.8 CONCLUSION

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen a qualitative phenomenological design that corresponds with my theoretical framework, namely constructivism. The phenomenological in-depth interviews conducted with various individuals focuses specifically on the different rituals and ceremonies performed during the period of grieving in the Hindi speaking community in Lenasia as well as it’s [the rituals and ceremonies] significance. The research methods employed were a literature review, individual interviews, field notes and observations. To enhance the validity and reliability of the study is was important for me to use strategies such as triangulation, peer examination and member checks.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations within a qualitative research study. In order to make the study more ethical, I assured the participants of their confidentiality and anonymity as well as their voluntary participation. In addition, I will continuously engage in self-reflection and self-monitoring as part of my commitment to an ethical study. Chapter four will concentrate on the presentation of results, analysis and discussion of the data and the findings of this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present the researcher’s findings and its implications by providing the reader with a detailed description of the various identified rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking community dealing with bereavement, with special reference to the significance attached to them. It begins by briefly clarifying the research problem. It then continues with a description of the study in terms of its context and characteristics. This is followed by a brief clarification of the data storage, retrieval and analysis process, which outlines how the data is unitised and categorised. The consolidated analysed products of the data are interpreted against the background of existing theoretical framework as presented in chapter two, as well as against new literature, which is referred to as a result of the findings.

4.1.1 The Research Problem

The research problem already stated in chapter one aims to determine the role of rituals and ceremonies in the grieving process amongst Hindi speaking people and how these [rituals and ceremonies] could be used in contemporary psychotherapy if needed. The culture, rituals and traditions of individuals and societies are particularly important in the area of death, dying and bereavement. Many people may find the emphasis on dying in eastern religions and cultures strange and even morbid. This is echoed in the words of the Dalai Lama (1995) who states that "the day of death is more important than the day of birth" which is the reverse of what the West has come to accept (Tschudin, 1997: 8).

Given the aforementioned assertion it is evident that a lot of what happens in eastern religions may not be understood by western societies, of particular note, that which happens amongst the Hindi-speaking communities during times of death and bereavement. Whilst the Hindi-speaking people’s form of grieving calls for great external displays of mourning in the form of performing
rituals and ceremonies, some western cultures call for many of the physical signs of death and bereavement to be controlled and made to disappear. This in turn leads to the situation where the psyche may need to compensate and suffer in trying to do so. The role of the rituals and ceremonies are unique in that it allows individuals who may be experiencing locked-up emotions or ‘unfinished business’ to continue the communication and connection with the deceased beyond the grave.

4.1.2 The context of the study

As already described in chapter three (refer to section 3.5.3) the data for this project was derived by the researcher from in-depth interviews conducted in Lenasia with members from the Hindi speaking community. Given that my study dealt with exploring and describing the role of the cultural practices such as rituals and ceremonies during the period of grieving in the Hindi-speaking community, the sample selection was purposive. Merriam asserts that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (1998: 61). In light of this, I had decided to interview an elderly man who had lost his wife to cancer a year ago; a young man who had lost both his parents about four years ago and a brother approximately seven months ago. I also interviewed a resident priest at the temple who conducts the various rituals and ceremonies on a daily basis. Finally, a Hindi-speaking psychologist who had counselled families from the Hindu community during the grieving process was interviewed.

The interview with the young man was replaced by an interview with another elder in the Hindi-speaking community who had recently buried his brother-in-law. The change occurred due to the young man’s sudden plans to emigrate to London. In addition, a second interview with another priest had to be conducted due to the initial interview not being clearly understood by the researcher. The first priest experienced difficulty expressing himself in English when explaining the various rituals and its significance.
My first interview was conducted with a man in his mid sixties who is also very involved in the various religious and community organisations in Lenasia. I chose to interview him first because I had observed him during the period of the death of his wife and had witnessed many of the rituals and ceremonies that were performed. I then decided to conduct the second interview with another man in his late eighties. His vast experience in supporting and working with the Hindu community assured me of gaining great insight into the various rituals and ceremonies performed during the period of grieving.

While the first two interviews were conducted with very little difficulty, I found the interview with the first priest a great challenge. As a researcher, I was concerned that my constant interruption for clarity was disturbing the flow of the conversation. I also observed that when asked to repeat what he had been explaining, he often responded with a very vague response, for example, he had been explaining why the coconut is used in the ceremonies, but when I asked what he had said, he responded with “its our religion”. My interview with the second priest yielded much more information. This interviewee works very closely with the temple and is currently part of the structures deliberating on issues of taking Hinduism forward with special reference to developing uniform procedures and practices for all Hindu people in South Africa.

Finally, my interview with the psychologist provided me with a different perspective of approaching rituals and ceremonies with regard to the role it [rituals and ceremonies] is seen to fulfill in therapy. Since the psychologist is from the Hindu faith and had experience in counselling individuals from this [the Hindi] community, she was able to understand the various practices and link them to therapy where necessary.

All the interviews were arranged well in advance and the participants were made aware of my rationale for interviewing them beforehand. The interviews were all held in the homes of the participants, which was of their choice. My rationale behind this decision stemmed from my understanding that the topic was a very sensitive and emotional one which would necessitate that the participants were comfortable in a safe and non-threatening environment and surrounded by artefacts relating to the various rituals and ceremonies.
4.1.3 Data Storage and Retrieval

All data was recorded by using an audio tape, field notes, observations as well as reflections. The interviews were terminated at the point when it was evident that the data was saturated and that no new topics were mentioned. All interviews, with the exception of the first priest, was transcribed verbatim. In the interview with the first priest, only broad themes and translated quotes to support the previous themes were transcribed because of the difficulty understanding the Hindi and Sanskrit words. Since these interview transcripts and identified themes formed the crux of the data analysis in this study, it was important to ensure that the transcripts were verbatim accounts of what transpired in the interviews.

4.1.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis and interpretation will be done according to Tesch’s (De Vos, 1998) eight steps as outlined in chapter three (refer to 3.6). Accordingly, the reading of the transcriptions will enable me to gain a holistic understanding and to immerse myself in the data in order to identify themes that seemed meaningful (Berg, 1995:180). Firstly, the researcher began to read the photocopied transcript of the first interview three times. During the second reading, the data was unitised, by looking for chunks or unit of meaning. The researcher then started to separate one unit of meaning from the next by indicating across the page a written word or phrase which contained the essence of the unit of meaning in the margin alongside. By working thoroughly with the transcripts, the main emergent ideas were written down to be arranged into major themes, sub-themes and leftovers. Following this process, each unit of meaning in the transcripts was further coded with reference to the original page in the transcript. These units of meaning were then cut out of the original transcripts and pasted onto chart paper to group them into themes and sub-themes to show the interrelationship between them.

Through the process mentioned above, the constant comparing and linking of themes and sub-themes resulted in the units of meanings being moved between the themes and sub-themes and theme names changing until the following themes and sub-themes (refer to table 4.1.4.1) emerged.
4.1.4.1 TABLE OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SUB THEME</th>
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<td>• Flexibility of practice</td>
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<td>2. Psychological impact of Rituals and ceremonies</td>
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<td>3. Inconsistencies in Rituals and ceremonies</td>
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<td>• Law of Karma</td>
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<td>5. Influence of the Family</td>
<td>• As support structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Means of sustaining/maintaining rituals and ceremonies</td>
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4.2 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The themes that emerged from the research, as tabled above, will now be interpreted and discussed. The interpretation is done with the intention of establishing credibility from a research point of view. It also aims to incorporate relevant theory, both from the existing theoretical framework and from theory included at this stage as a result of the findings.
4.2.1 Identified Rituals and Ceremonies

It was found that many of the rituals and ceremonies that were performed revealed the use of various symbolic representations or manifestations and demonstrated a fair degree of flexibility in the practicing of the rituals and ceremonies. These will be discussed as two separate sub-themes.

4.2.1.1 Symbolic References

Much has been said and written on symbols used in the various rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi-speaking community such as the use of the lamp, the various deities together with their relevance and the use of various animals used in the different parables. Perhaps it may be useful to reflect on the meaning of the word symbol. It is derived from the Greek “sum-balloo” denoting “I throw together”, “the throwing together”. What is being thrown together in the symbol is; on the one hand, its form, its literal value, and on the other hand, the life, which it leads in us, understood or misunderstood, in the conscious or in the unconscious. As such, it is different from a sign, although there are instances when signs can become symbols. When the sign becomes inseparably fused with inner life, it stops being merely significant, it gets additional value, it becomes symbolic (Nityanand, 1993: 31).

In the case of this study, there appears to be quite a bit of symbolic references attached to certain practices as well as different apparatus and substances used. The use of symbolism extends from the time of death through to the post death rites rituals and ceremonies.

4.2.1.1.1 At time of death.

At the time of death, the body is placed on the floor with the head facing north. By facing north, one is symbolically paying homage to the Sun god – Suri Bhagwan as outlined in the following extracts: "and we respect that source of energy because there is absolutely nothing on Mother Earth that can complete its task without the assistance from the sun-solar energy" (transcript 3:4). This was reiterated by another participant who stated that "we bring the body home and lay
it down facing where the sun rises” (transcript 1:2). The placing of the body on the floor is said to delay the process of decay as indicated by a participant, “from a scientific point of view, warm, hot air rises and the higher the body is from the ground, the chances of decay sets in faster” (transcript 3:1). Immediately after placing the body on the floor “a lamp is lit and placed just above the head of the deceased person” (transcript 3:1) and “a lamp is lit until the person has been cremated, and the other rituals takes place” (transcript 4:1). The lamp, according to the readings from the Hindu Student Councils (1997:1) symbolises knowledge while darkness symbolises ignorance. The traditional oil lamp which is lit above the head of the deceased has a further ‘spiritual significance’. “The oil or ghee [processed butter] in the lamp symbolises our vasanas [accumulation of desires and deeds] or negative tendencies and the wick, the ego. When lit by spiritual knowledge, the vasanas is slowly exhausted and the ego too finally perishes. The flame of the lamp always burns upwards. Similarly we should acquire such knowledge as to take us towards higher ideals” (Bhaskarananda, 1994:141). As asserted by Mothilal & Maraj (1995:6) that the earthenware lamp is lit and maintained for the period of mourning to remind mourners of the temporality of life on earth. Finally, the lamp/light is said to give the onlooker a clearer view of the image of Godhead, symbolically representing some sort of inner sight (Bhaskarananda, 1994:143).

Another important ritual is the preparation of the rice balls (pindas) as alluded to in chapter two, where Mothilala and Maraj state that the departed soul attains fitness for becoming a mane [pithri] through the preparation and offering of the pindas (1995:6). According to a participant, these pindas are made and offered so as “to equip this departing soul with a subtle body” (transcript 3:2). Over and above the use of substances or items such as the lamp or the rice balls, the body is also prepared for the cremation. During this process, the body is bathed which is said to prepare the body to receive the prayers and invocations. The application of different substances on the body each bears some form of symbolic reference. Sandalwood paste (channan) is done with the belief that the pleasant smell promotes the cooling and soothing of the mind while the turmeric powder prevents immediate decay. The sesame seeds and rice is symbolic of fertility while the use of gold is said to represent the deity Mother Lutchmee and the thulasi (slingerberry) symbolically represents Lord Vishnu’s consort (Mothilal & Maraj, 1995:7).
4.2.1.1.2  On Cremation

According to the interviews, most of the rituals performed during this stage bears reference to the committing of the body to the five elements, which it is said to be made of, water; fire, earth, air and ether (refer to chapter 2:24). As uttered in the words of a participant, "the Hindu philosophy believes that the body is made up of 5 elements and at death the physical body goes back to those 5 elements. Water, fire, ether...I just cannot get it...but it's made up 5 elements. And it goes back to them" (transcript 3:3). Another participant declared that "it says that you respect what you are made of...all the different 5 elements" (transcript 3:7). The symbolic references of the five elements, according to Nityanand, is described as earth representing the physical body of man and his material interests in life while water is considered the element ‘in motion’ which denotes the fleeting flowing element in man namely his emotional life. Water is also sanctified and used to wash away impurities and sins. Fire, on the other hand, is symbolically connected with the mental life of man from where his urges and passions are supposed to spring from and air/wind denotes the relationship between the airy and the spirituality. The final element, ether, makes reference to the ‘upper air’ which is breath but also soul/spirit. This spiritual world includes the inspiration, thus this element if interpreted literally would mean ‘the intake of air’ and taken figuratively would refer to intuition or inner knowledge (1993: 31).

The use of water and flowers in all the ceremonies symbolises the element water denoting the emotional life of the individual and the incense, which rises in the spiritual element air. By cremating the body, one is committing the physical body to the element fire as stated by a participant, "he does a hawan, now the hawan he does symbolises Agni-Mata. Agni is Fire and Mata is Mother ... We are saying to her that today we are disposing of the body and you are the means by which, through which the body will go back to the five elements... and therefore we pray to Mother Agni and the body is returned"(transcript 3:9). The literature (refer to chapter 2:26) however, states that “the body is disposed off in one of three means namely, by fire [Agni daha], burial [Bhumi daha] or water [Jal daha] (Mothilal & Maraj,1995:9). In most instances, fire is considered the most efficient since fire has the ability to incinerate all germs and
bacteria. This prevents the spread of epidemics, which can result in contamination of the soil and water.

4.2.1.1.3 Post death

After the cremation, the ashes are collected as intimated by the participants, "the son will go with an earthenware clay pot, collect the ashes, symbolically pour milk over it" (transcript 3:2) and "when you are collecting the ashes... it is very precious to them... we take that and bring it outside and we sort of cool it off... not necessarily but it is said that milk because of its purity" (transcript 1:5). According to De Reede, "the ashes is the only matter which cannot be destroyed. They symbolise the indestructible in man that remains after everything has been burned up including himself. The ashes are therefore a reminder of death and the eternal at the same time, and constitute a true symbol, the Ultimate Oneness" (Bhaskarananda, 1994:141). The pouring of milk symbolises both purity, through its whiteness, as well as nourishment. The releasing of the ashes into the river is again, symbolically recommitting the physical body back to the element of water.

During the post death period, the shaving off of the hair is symbolically expressing humility as well as mourning. This is depicted in the following extracts, "you shave the hair off, it’s to indicate the mourning period for the deceased" (transcript 1:7) and "the hair by removing it, you know when one stands your proudest, your pride is in your head... your hair. You remove it and say look, I bow myself to you, in the Hindi sense, it is ‘Munda’, it is I have nothing else to give, you have won. I bow myself and please take this body or this soul away" (transcript 3:6).

The washing of hands and sprinkling of water in front of a little fire before re-entering the home is done for the purpose of cleansing oneself of the impurities from the crematorium as a participant outlined, "...sort of purification, from coming away, cleansing yourself, coming away from the crematorium, when we go into the home, we wash our hands." (transcript 1:6) and "symbolically a purification for the people who attended the funeral" (transcript 3:10). "With the hawan, we use coconut, we use it in most of the prayers, because it is the purest
fruit and it has special meanings” (transcript 1: 14) The use of coconut in all the ceremonies has a very significant symbolic reference:

“The coarsely –knit outer fibres of the coconut represents the jealousy, greed, lust, selfishness and other vices of man, which must be broken up and removed if one is to penetrate and reach the white inner purity and thereafter taste the sweet untouched nectar of spiritual purity and bliss. No other fruit has the three distinct eyes of the coconut. These symbolise the Trinity of Evolution – Creation, Preservation and Dissolution. The eyes also represent the three eyes of man – the two physical eyes and the third or “inner eye” which is the mind’s eye of conscience. The composition of the coconut is characteristic of the three elements of man. The hard outer shell with its coarse fibres, represents the physical composition. The inner white fruit represents man’s psychological element and the untouched water signifies his spiritual composition” (Nityanand, 1993:281).

From my observations, it is clear that the performance of the various ceremonies and rituals are a vital component during the grieving process. As a psychologist working with the bereaved from a Hindi-speaking community, it would seem very beneficial to use some of these processes outlined above in therapy. For example, the use of the coconut could be used to encourage a client to tap deeper into his or her self to explain what difficulties lie within and need to be brought to the fore. It also allows the client to see that, just like the coconut with the different layers, much of a person’s outward behaviour and responses are not necessarily what the client contains within. This allows him or her to explore the various layers of behaviour and patterned responses: The lamp could be used as a medium to connect with the deceased. It would be important for the psychologist to be mindful of the different stages in the process of grieving for the Hindi client since these stages each have different functions and the role of the client may change from the one stage to next. Being aware of these stages allows the psychologist to incorporate the various rituals and ceremonies as they unfold in the grieving process. It also allows the psychologist to make use of the various symbols depending in which stage the client finds him/herself at that time.
While there is no question about the importance of the various rituals and ceremonies in the grieving process, it is evident from both the interviews and the literature review, as outlined in chapter two, that there is a fair degree of flexibility concerning the performance of some of these rituals and ceremonies.

4.2.1.2. Flexibility in Practice

Although the rituals and ceremonies that are performed followed a similar pattern which is evident in all the interviews, there are a few instances where latitude in how they [rituals and ceremonies] are performed is afforded due to the unavailability of certain substances or because of the changing or different contexts. Initially women were not ‘allowed’ to go to the crematorium. This is now changing and the ‘sanction’ is now being lifted as expounded by a participant, “*but today, in modern times, you find that a lot of people go to the crematorium ... so there’s no hard and fast rule. It’s not religiously what you call ... that women can’t go*” (transcript 1:5). Another instance of flexibility in practice can be demonstrated by the substitution of ingredients or substances used during the process of cremation. As a participant stated, “… *but because of the paucity of it, because of its expensiveness a little bit of it [channan-sandalwood sticks], a hundred grams cost you almost one hundred rands today so who’s going to have one thousand rands to buy a kilogram. So they use flower*” (transcript 3:8).

Finally, the flexibility is further exposed in the performance of the post death rites as confirmed by a participant, “*initially, or in the past, it used to be done, one every day, but because of all the time constraints today, the Hindi community does it on the 10th day*” (transcript 3:4). The notion of flexibility in the practice of rituals and ceremonies is supported by literature (refer to chapter 2:20), which explained that the changes to many of the rituals and ceremonies stemmed from changes in society and societal needs. This is alluded to by Bhasharananda (1994:40) who asserts that “*today, because of the changed times and altered lifestyles of the Hindus, not all the samskaras [ceremonies and sacrifices] are strictly followed. Under special circumstances such lapses are condoned by Hinduism. For instance, the scriptures say that a Hindu need not strictly observe the scriptural injunctions and prohibitions in a foreign land if the circumstances there are...*
not conducive to such an observance”. These sentiments are further entrenched by Driver (1991:6), who stresses that “rituals are in fact not changeless, and any attempt to make them so violates their nature”. In conclusion, Matheny (1993:7) asserts that “if we are to employ rituals, they must change. There are major ways in which rituals can change: how they are performed and what is used in the performance”.

As a researcher, my observations of the identified rituals and ceremonies have highlighted the fact that they [rituals and ceremonies] are vast as they are varied. The richness of participation and symbolism has exposed me, as a researcher, to a very enriching encounter. I have noted that the role of women in the participation of these rituals and ceremonies was minimized. Wives or daughters, although they may have been the ‘chief mourners’, were not included in the actual performance of any of the ceremonies. Their role appeared to be restricted to ‘mourning’ and the preparation of the pindas [rice balls] and milk required for the prayers as well as the preparation of food. This is of great importance for the psychologist counselling the woman from the Hindi community. It may be evident that the individual may feel that she had not had the opportunity to ‘do’ much for ensuring the well being of the deceased. Furthermore, it is vital that the psychologist bear in mind that the flexibility in performing the rituals and ceremonies means that different clients from the Hindi speaking community may have been exposed to differences in practice. The incorporation of the rituals and ceremonies should entail practices that are familiar to the client.

While the ceremonies and rituals performed reflected a great deal of uniformity, there were instances where significant inconsistencies in the performance of them [rituals and ceremonies] were noted.

4.2.2 Inconsistencies of Rituals and Ceremonies

In the case of this study, much of the “symbolism is employed to simplify human efforts to expose the ultimate Truth and the underlying principles, giving adequate opportunities to the aspirants to interpret with the aim of getting their answers from and in themselves” (Nityanand, 1993:53).
The analysis of the interviews has highlighted three important areas in which inconsistencies of the rituals and ceremonies were found. These include the aspect of time, that is the time of death as well as the timing of rituals and ceremonies after death; the soul and certain rituals.

I will begin by outlining the inconsistencies pertaining to the time. "When you arrange with the priest, you arrange your own time, you don't have to go according to the time the priest specifies to you, although some people do" (transcript 1:2). On the other hand, "...this is done by consultation with the priest because he has the Hindu almanac with him and he refers to it and gives the grieving family an idea as to the time the person has died whether it was during this 'panchak' [inauspicious time] or not" (transcript 3:1). According to these extracts, there are conflicting ideas about the procedure. These have direct implications for the rituals and ceremonies that follow. Maraj and Mothilal (1995:7) alludes to the significance of time of death and its implications by asserting that the time of death has to be considered and additional ceremonies need to be performed in the case of the death occurring during an inauspicious time. It is further believed that ill luck will befall the sons and close relatives.

Furthermore, the timing of death has also been noted to differ from one participant to the other. For example, one participant subscribed to the belief that the counting of days for the performance of the 10 and 13 day ceremonies should begin from the day the body is cremated, “does one count the 10 and 13 day ceremony from the day of death or day of disposal? Now those of us who have our faith in scriptures obviously follows the scriptural injunctions which say that day of disposal....when this body has physically disintegrated, that is the day that is what the scriptures call a period of ‘su-tak’” (transcript 3:5). Another participant proclaimed that one needs to start counting from the day the person has died “but in reality speaking, the person passed away, he died on that particular day, the soul is gone. That’s the time you got to start counting from because it affects the 10 days and 13 days” (transcript 1:11).

It was found that the participants differed in their understanding of the soul’s journey after death. While the one participant alluded to the notion that the soul transmigrates immediately into another body, “if the soul has left the body immediately, that is what we are saying, that soul may have taken the form of another body...immediately” (transcript 1:11), another participant
expressed that the soul lingers for a period of time before moving on, “it only lingers in the first 10 days” (transcript 3:10). These differences in understanding the journey of the soul is alluded to in chapter two where the different academics make reference to their understanding of the journey of the soul. It then stands to reason that since there appears to be differences with regard to the different sects’ (Chapter 2:22) understanding of the route the soul takes and its duration thereof, it is clear that it will reflect differences in the rituals and ceremonies and the period of mourning for the Hindi speaking community.

The other significant inconsistency emanates from the understanding that, according to literature (Bhaskarananda 1994, Vedalankar 1981, Vivekananda 1974), while the soul is considered to be sexless, there appears to be differences with regard to when the ceremonies are done, for example for a woman it is done on the 12th day while the ceremony for men is done on the 13th day. This is captured in the voice of a participant who questioned, “and the other thing I want to know is... the soul has got no gender, so why do we discriminate and say 9 and 12 days if a woman has passed away and 10 and 13 days for a man that passes away” (transcript 1:12).

Other inconsistencies in the process of grieving can be found in the actual performance of the rituals. One such ritual is the ‘dressing up’ of the corpse that appears to be inconsistent with what the scriptures prescribe. As a participant voiced “when necessary men and women pass away... her families keep her wedding outfit or some aspect of wedding” (transcript 3:6) and another participant supported this by stating that, “if it is a female, the way she is dressed up in the coffin, will determine whether she was single or married, if she was married, she would be dressed up as a bride” (transcript 4:1). According to the scriptures (as quoted in transcript 3:6) it says, “all I ask is to dress the body in 6 metres of calico, nothing else”. Another ritual where this could be noted is in the performance of the last rites ceremony at the crematorium. While one participant asserted that “the son who is doing the last rites will have to circumulate the body 5 times” (transcript 3:9), another remarked that “he goes around 7 times, the significance of the 7 times, I wouldn’t be able to tell you what it is” (transcript 1:4).

Finally, there appears to be inconsistencies concerning the understanding of why certain substances are used during the ceremonies. One such example would be the use of
ghee (processed butter). While one participant believed that “they then use ghee, which they smear all over the main parts of the body like the face, eyes and legs. That too for purification” (transcript 1:2), another mentioned that “because it’s going for cremation and they apply ghee to the body...ghee is because the fire...when it burns with ghee, it burns better” (transcript 2:4). The literature, on the other hand, postulates that “sandal-paste and ghee (processed butter), mixed with thill is smeared on the body to protect the corpse against decomposition” (Mothilal & Maraj, 1995:6).

My observations has led me, as researcher, to conclude that much of the inconsistencies noted emanates from a lack of understanding of the significance of the various rituals and ceremonies. While some individuals may be performing a ritual or ceremony because of and in accordance to the scriptural injunctions, they [the priests and scholars] have not ‘educated’ the ‘ordinary’ person in the community. This is evident in the sentiments expounded by a participant, “what the real meaning is, I cannot tell you. So these are the things that are being questioned and it is not explained properly” as well as “so this also confuse people and have put into people a lot of fear” (transcript 2:5). Other contributing factors that could explain the inconsistencies are matters of economics and urbanisation. Many of the substances used for the various rituals or ceremonies are very expensive, hence the need to substitute a few. In other instances, many of the children of the ‘older’ Hindi speaking families have moved to areas outside of Lenasia and the availability of these substances in these areas are scarce. Furthermore, many individuals have started to dismiss certain rituals as primitive and impractical. In keeping with this notion, Beck and Metrick explain that “we do not understand much of what we do or why and if we did, we would probably be appalled. Much of the symbolism which is still observed today is dated from primitive times and continues to be done simply because ‘that’s the way it has always been done’ as if that very fact makes it sacred. Some of us may even have an understanding of the futility of so many rites and actions but choose to smilingly tolerate them as quaint or romantic” (1990:6).

For the psychologist, it could be a good opportunity to allow the client who is confused about what is being done to explore the meaning of the various practices and the importance it has to him or her. Some clients may display immense feelings of guilt at not having done enough for the deceased. The psychologist could use the opportunity to allow the client, in therapy, either through imagery or through other techniques to perform some of the ceremonies. This will serve
to minimise guilt and allow the client to ‘work through’ the feelings of guilt and ‘unfinished business’.

What I found quite consistently was that some of the individuals interviewed began searching for answers and explanations of a spiritual nature.

4.2.3 Spirituality

“The spiritual dimension is your core, your centre, your commitment to your value system. It is a very private area of life and a supremely important one. It draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift you and tie you to the timeless truths of all humanity. And people do it very, very differently” (Covey, 1994:292). The issues of spirituality relating specifically to aspects of karma and reincarnation as expressed in the interviews are aptly captured in the aforementioned quote. While the interviews may have expressed inconsistencies as mentioned earlier, the belief in karma and reincarnation were undisputed.

“Hindi faith is based on the Law of Karma—what you do, you will reap—and your faith is determined already” (transcript 4:1). According to the participants, each individual, regardless of status, caste, sex or creed is subject to the Law of Karma which dictates, ‘as you sow, so shall you reap” (refer to chapter 2:21). During the process of grieving, some families, in an attempt to ascertain what form the soul may have taken, do a certain ritual, “they place the rice in a plate and they leave it outside... if they find a footprint of a bird or a baby foot, then they can determine what life the soul took” (transcript 4:2). Given the fact that many rituals are done, it is abundantly clear from the interviews that every individual is responsible and accountable for their own actions. The rituals and ceremonies which are performed are done for the purpose of “making the journey a little more comfortable” (transcript 3:10), but not to “alter, increase or decrease the karma” (transcript 3:10). As a participant posits, “in terms of its own karma, mete out what is due to the person...no matter what you do or what you don’t do, this will not affect the accrued karma of the departed soul...the giving and all does not... what it does, it equips the soul for the journey ahead” (transcript 3:9). This is further endorsed by the sentiments of another participant in, “whatever you do, it affects you...that I am accountable for that...your action is your action,
the person is gone... there’s nothing you can do for that person...that he is accountable for his own action so how’s he going to be judged” (transcript 2:7).

According to literature as outlined earlier (refer to chapter 2:21) the soul is beyond birth and death and travels through the cycle of reincarnation. Since the aspects of karma and reincarnation are integral components of the basic tenets of Hinduism, it follows that man is urged to constantly prepare for the next life. The writings of Vivekananda stress that:

“each one of us is the effect of the infinite past; the child is ushered into the world, not as something flashing from the hands of nature, as poets delight so much to depict, but he has the burden of an infinite past; for good or evil he comes to work out his own past deeds. That makes the differentiation. This is the law of Karma. Each one of us is the maker of his own fate. This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate, and gives us the only means of reconciliation between God and man. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes. We are free therefore. If I am unhappy, it has been of my own making and that very thing show that I can be happy if I will. If I am impure, that is also of my own making, and that I can be pure if I will. The human will stands beyond all circumstances. Before it, the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man, all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of Karma” (1974: 26).

As a researcher, I am acutely aware that much of what is done by way of daily practices and the various rituals and ceremonies, is done in preparation for one’s own self. If the belief that “the spiritual dimension is your core, your centre, your commitment to your value system” (Covey as quoted above) holds true, then it can be asserted that the Hindi community would “continually strive for the main goal or supreme objective in life which is to achieve eternal freedom from the shackles of earthly bondage and death through divine experience of God Realisation” (Vivekananda, 1974:26).

In one’s quest for God Realisation or Moksha which is done directly and indirectly in the performance of certain rituals and ceremonies during the period of mourning, the Hindu believes
that one is constantly guided and supported by one’s family and ancestors. Therefore, their influence cannot be overemphasised.

4.2.4 Influence of the family during the performance of the rituals and ceremonies

The family plays a vital role in all the rituals and ceremonies performed during the period of grieving. In all the interviews, the participants confirmed that the first port of call was to inform the families, “all the family come together and we notify all our relatives and friends of the funeral” (transcript 1:2). These families would then assume various responsibilities. They would arrive at the home of the deceased to offer condolences and support which is immensely needed as a participant mentioned that, “...in the purity of the family around us, immediate family and the people around us who are supporting us, giving us the pure support” (transcript 1:1). In addition, the family members would be expected to bathe the body of the deceased and prepare it for cremation, if the deceased is a female then, “...ladies-close family, her sisters, my sisters... bathe the body” (transcript 1:2) and if it is a male then “male members of the family would go and cleanse the body” (transcript 3:6). Once this is done, the family members “would then sit around the body and softly sing Bhajans[hymns]...they volunteer to sing a few hymns as you may call it” (transcript 1:2). This is done to offer comfort and as stated by a participant, “this consoles the family” (transcript 1:2). The act of volunteering to sing in an attempt to provide solace and comfort for the grieving family is supported by literature (Matheny:1993:5) which postulates that rituals provide spoken and embodied vocabularies for communicating and reconfirming intense feelings of respect, awe, sorrow, loyalty, tenderness and attraction, particularly in those situations where the use of discursive vocabularies tend to flatten the depth of feelings and/or stray off into thoughts unrelated to the sentiments themselves. Thereafter, it is the family members who are expected to serve as pall bearers, “the body is then picked up by the close family, the sons and the very close family and the body is then taken to the hearse” (transcript 1:2). During the process of people offering condolences and bidding farewell to the deceased, the extended family is expected to stand in the forefront and provide both moral and physical support to the immediate family as explained, “the close family stands in the front” (transcript 1:2). The role and influence of the family extend from the time of death throughout the process ending on the thirteenth day. They would be directly involved in performing the ceremonies, “someone very close to the family, meaning from the husband’s side or wife’s side
will then assist with the prayers” (transcript 1:4) and “...if there’s no son...one of the children close to the family...maybe deceased sister’s children or the deceased’s brother’s children can do it if she had no sons” (transcript 1:4). The important role that rituals and ceremonies play in relation to family is further supported by literature as outlined in chapter two where both Driver (1991) as well as Bastien and Bromley (1980) support the notion that rituals and ceremonies serve to bring people together thereby fostering a sense of kinship and communal bonding.

Apart from the fact that the family members play an instrumental role in assisting with the various rituals and ceremonies, their influence is quite strong in ensuring that customs and traditions are maintained. This is evident by a participant’s admission of, “I wanted my wife to be cremated in a white linol cloth (calico) but unfortunately the family decided that she must be dressed in one of her best saris and I finally agreed to that” (transcript 1:2). While the influence of the family is acknowledged as being very significant, the other essential influence in the process of performing the rituals and ceremonies is that of the ancestors. As alluded to by most of the participants, homage is paid to the ancestors by performing certain rituals and ceremonies during the period of mourning. These are said to be done out of a sense of duty as expressed in the following extracts “…also the ancestors and they take the name of the ancestors and deities” (transcript 2:2); “a ‘thanksgiving’ to those parents that we still remember you” (transcript 3:5) and “they are duty-bound because if it is their parent, mother or father so duty bound they are doing this to say well, they have to do it” (transcript 2:4).

According to literature “the deepest significance of funeral rites lies in their yoking the inner and outer worlds and the recognition that a family consists not just of its living generations, but its ancestors as well” (Bhaskarananda, 1994:4).

As a researcher, I am quite overwhelmed by the immense support provided by the extended family during the period of grieving. It was clear from the interviews conducted that the individuals boasted closer bonds, better understanding and respect for each others’ strengths, enhancement of mutual problem-solving skills, greater empathy and increased sharing following the death of the family member. Closer bonds developed, particularly amongst family members who lived outside of Lenasia and decided to stay at the home of the deceased until the thirteenth day ceremony. The respect for each others’ strength was demonstrated when it was decided that
the ‘older’ family members would do the cooking while the ‘youngsters’ were tasked with doing the shopping and basic ‘running about’. While it was clearly noted that support is needed both during the mourning period and after, a participant felt that this was not always forthcoming. While family members provided the bereaved with the ‘strongest resource’ to cope with the pain of the loss, in some instances the family members failed to provide ongoing support after the ceremonies. For me, it could seem that the reason for the failure to sustain the support rendered could stem from the fact that many people are working and others do not reside within close proximity to ensure daily visits. For the psychologist, it would be important to note that the Hindi community subscribes much to collectivism as opposed to individualism hence, family therapy may be deemed highly effective. Thus, when providing grief counselling for individuals from the Hindi community, it is recommended that the psychologist allow the client to identify support within the family structure that could be used in addition to psychotherapy.

Closely tied in with the significant role and influence that the family and ancestors play in the performance of the various rituals and ceremonies, many of these rituals and ceremonies have a great psychological impact for those grieving as well as those supporting the bereaved.

4.2.5. The Psychological Impact of Rituals and Ceremonies

Some rituals and ceremonies are said to have a significant psychological impact as illustrated by the following extracts. Firstly, “...they have the sandoor on their heads...that I had to remove by wiping it off so that it showed that I am now a widower (transcript 1:2) and “the sandoor is removed. This symbolises that the union between the two people has now come to an end this refers to the rubbing off of the sandoor (red powder) by the husband from the head of the wife (transcript 3:7). Secondly, ‘...they put them all together and make it into one big bundle...we have a certain leaf, they take it...it’s quite strong, they take that and cut through it, the whole thing. This now signifies that now from this time onward, that relationship is now not with you, it’s now gone” (transcript 2:3). This can be explained by Driver (1991) who states that the “ritual becomes the vehicle for a change in identity ... or relationship to reality, as in worship or funerals” (Matheny, 1993:6)
The performance of almost all the rituals and ceremonies necessitates the presence of family and community members as outlined in the above-mentioned theme. This 'getting together' or "communal component provides an emotional grounding" (Matheny 1993:3). This is clear from the following, "it's always your close people that are always around and of-course, the group that is going to sing the Bhajans...the family themselves sing the bhajans. That is more soothing, that is very good" (transcript 1:10) and "I think that the support or the counselling from the immediate family and of-course your religious leader is so important" (transcript 1:10). Another important way in which rituals and ceremonies create a psychological impact is that it promotes catharsis by allowing individuals to express their grief and loss in a way they feel comfortable with no restrictions. As one participant confirmed, "they are allowed to cry and many times through that emotions people discuss their feelings and their relationship with the person that's dead...and in that way, they will be able to discuss what went along with their relationship" (transcript 4:1) and another who asserted that, "but crying is allowed and if a person becomes hysterical, that is ... they are not allowed to subdue their feelings, it's fine. It's not like a permission. You're allowed to mourn as you see the person" (transcript 4:3). By expressing one’s grief through crying and talking about the deceased, as is the case in the Hindu community, one is, as postulated by Beck and Metrick (1990) "offered a time for you to be fully present with the pain as well as a means to finding acceptance of it" (Matheny,1993:11).

One of the most painful aspects of losing a significant other is the notion of finality. According to the Hindu belief, though, death is not considered final as alluded to by different participants, "the Hindu faith believe the soul does not die, it is the body that in fact dies" (transcript 4:1); "soul cannot be consoled, soul is gone, it’s only the materialistic body that is cremated" (transcript 1:9) and "the journey of the soul after death" (transcript 3:13). For the Hindi, it is comforting to know that one is still able to maintain a bond with the deceased as stated by a participant, "this break, physical break doesn’t mean a break in your linkage to your past, your present is definitely a link to your past and today’s present will become the past of the future" (transcript 3: 14). A ritual that allows this bond to continue is described as, "and the pitr pik is a period set aside and ...this is where you can actually satisfy the manes, satisfy the pitrs-all those that have departed" (transcript 2:7). This continued relationship is adequately supported by Klass, Silverman and Nickman in chapter two, who proclaim that the maintenance of a bond with the deceased beyond death is an important requisite when providing grief counselling. For
providing psychological support this idea of continuing a bond beyond death is further entrenched in chapter two where it is suggested that the physical death not be denied but rather to continue a bond with an inner representation of the deceased, in the case of the Hindi community, the inner representation would constitute the soul (Klass et.al, 1996).

Added to the need for continuing a bond with the deceased, it was also clear that psychological wellbeing is enhanced by the feeling that the bereaved had paid their dues to the deceased and had been afforded an opportunity to bid farewell. This can be confirmed by the following extracts, “people are emotionally struck and in that short period of time, they cannot just forget the person that has been, so most probably by doing these ceremonies, they find some sort of satisfaction. You know that they’ve done the work for this particular person that has passed away” (transcript 1:9). The process of bidding farewell is done by offering water, flowers and a prayer, “the body is brought home for the community to pay its final respects” (transcript 3:6) and “those who had known her want to pay their last respects” (transcript 1:3). These rites are also for the living, as expressed in chapter two, allowing the family to have a respectable and dignified farewell and to express grief and emotions that they naturally encounter.

Another important psychological impact is that of the food eaten during the period of grieving. All immediate and extended families who participate in the various rituals and ceremonies are expected to fast. This fasting entails the eating of vegetable, which had been prepared without the use of spices. The first ten days, boiled food is offered. The rationale for the fasting is said to be beneficial for restoring a balance within the bereaved. This can be understood from the following extracts, “the ten days is going to be very traumatic, …and you want to retain a calm composure over the next few… so this type of food, boiled food, is given is very conducive to this sidvic guna. And that is why boiled food is given … actually it sort of calm you down and you find that your body begins to function very well rather than pungent food” (transcript 3:11); and “the dietary requirements is only that you fast for the thirteen days. It has to be food that has no oil or that is fried, because of the dietary system of the body, for purification of the body” (transcript 1:8).

In conclusion, from my observations I believe that the psychological impact of rituals and ceremonies cannot be overemphasised. Since I subscribe to the paradigm of constructivism,
which negates the role of people as passive onlookers, I align myself with the sentiments expressed by Driver (1991), Beck and Metrick (1990) who assert that rituals and ceremonies restores a sense of power since the individual is personally involved in the process as opposed to being a passive onlooker with processes happening around oneself. Rituals and ceremonies are important to restore balance in one’s life. For the psychologists, the use of the various rituals and ceremonies in therapy could be very beneficial. For example, the child experiencing difficulties expressing his or her thoughts about the death of a significant other can be provided with the ‘equipment’ for the rituals, such as the lamp, photograph and fire. The rituals or ceremonies, in a play therapy session, could be re-enacted and the child could then talk through the process or show what has happened and thereby making sense of the process.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter focussed on the meanings of the researcher’s findings and its implication concerning the rituals and ceremonies performed by the Hindi speaking community during the process of grieving. It sought to clarify issues relating to the research problem, the context of the study and the process of data storage, retrieval and analysis. The five themes with its accompanying sub-themes were illustrated. These themes and sub-themes were analysed and interpreted. The analysis yielded great insight into the role of symbolism; family support; spirituality with an emphasis on two key components, namely, karma and reincarnation; inconsistencies in practice and the psychological impact of the identified rituals and ceremonies.

Chapter five will present a summary of the study, the results and the limitations of the study. Furthermore, it will provide recommendations for future study. Finally, possible guidelines for educational psychologists on how the various rituals and ceremonies could be incorporated into modern forms of psychotherapy if needed, will be presented.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter serves to provide an overview of the study with reference to the background, problem, aim, method and design of the research. It aims to draw conclusions and offer guidelines for educational psychologists on how the various rituals and ceremonies could be incorporated into contemporary forms of psychotherapy if needed. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further study will also be discussed.

5.1 Overview of the study

In chapter one of the study, the rationale and context of the study was outlined. The fact that various cultural and religious groups acceded to the age old practice of performing rituals and ceremonies during the process of grieving made it abundantly clear that they [rituals and ceremonies] serve an important function for human beings and is deemed to enhance the healing process, hence the continuity from generation to generation. An array of literature outlining the views of different theorists who expounded on the significant role of rituals and ceremonies was outlined. The need to ensure cultural sensitivity as entrenched by the Vail Conference (refer to chapter 1:3) was alluded to emphasising the need for therapists to be mindful and accepting of the cultural practices and beliefs of their clients.

Throughout the study, the constructivist approach formed the basis of my paradigmatic perspective. This approach propounded that each individual constructs his or her own reality based on one's own subjective understandings and interpretations.

5.2 The Problem and Aim

The problem that was studied in this research focussed on bridging the gap between existing forms of psychotherapy and the role of rituals and ceremonies during the period of grieving in the Hindi community. The aim was to gain a deeper insight into the role and significance of the various cultural practices [rituals and ceremonies] with the intention of providing guidelines to enhance the psychotherapeutic intervention educational psychologists employ when counselling the bereaved from the Hindi speaking community.
5.3 The Research Design

The research design that was used in this study could be described as qualitative, contextual, explorative and descriptive. The method employed was phenomenological in that it sought to describe human experiences at their deepest level. In the instance of this study, it sought to describe the very intimate and personal expressions of grief through the performance of rituals and ceremonies. Given that, providing psychotherapy to clients across the racial and cultural spectrum is not an unknown phenomenon, employing some rituals and ceremonies for particular cultural/religious groups constitutes a new study.

5.4 Results

Firstly, rituals and ceremonies are practiced amongst all Hindi-speaking people. All these rituals and ceremonies have a very strong use of symbolism. Symbols are used to refer to the five elements, namely ether, water, fire, earth and air, that man comprises of, according to Hindu belief. Others are used to denote worship unto a particular deity and still, others are used to represent a phase or transition in life. Many ceremonies are done for the purpose of allowing the soul to move on to another dimension. Some ceremonies are done for the ancestors as an acknowledgment of the important role they played as well as to request that they [ancestors] accept the deceased into the realms beyond this world.

Secondly, it was evident that while the rituals and ceremonies were undoubtedly performed, all the participants did not always do it in exactly the same way. There were inconsistencies regarding the actual performance of certain rituals and ceremonies as well as the participants understanding regarding the significance of them [rituals and ceremonies]. These inconsistencies appeared to be the result of societal changes, economic and social status of families and the availability of material resources. The most important reason for the inconsistencies stemmed from a lack of understanding since there appears to be little knowledge sharing amongst those who are 'au fait' with the scriptures and those who are practicing out of tradition.

Thirdly, it is clear that there is a deep-seated sense of spirituality, particularly with reference to the soul and its journey beyond the death of an individual, the law of karma and the doctrine of reincarnation or 'rebirth'. All Hindus subscribe to the belief that the soul is eternal and that it
transmigrates upon death of an individual. The soul carries with it impressions of its previous lives. The soul is then meted out its dues in terms of rewards and punishment, which is the underlying meaning of the law of karma – ‘as you sow, so shall you reap’. The Hindus also believe in ‘rebirth’ or reincarnation, which occurs after approximately a year. The soul is thereafter endowed with another body so that it could serve out its karma.

Fourthly, during the period of grieving, the family serves as the central support resource upon which the bereaved relies to attend to the day to day ‘duties’ of the family. They are responsible for the feeding and wellbeing of the immediate family and all those who come to pay their respects during the first thirteen days. The extended family together with other community members and religious groups converge at the home of the deceased and engage themselves with the singing of bhajans [hymns] and readings from the scriptures. Apart from providing the support, the elders are also consulted on what must be done, thereby ensuring the continuity of the practices [rituals and ceremonies], that are passed on from one generation to the next.

Finally, of tremendous importance for this study, was the findings regarding the psychological impact of the various rituals and ceremonies. These [findings] revealed that the impact or significance, from a psychological perspective was multifarious. Firstly, it served to bring people physically together as well as uniting them emotionally. For the bereaved family, they provided a great resource for support. By coming together, it created a cohesive bond thereby removing the feelings of isolation of family members. It also fostered feelings of affection and goodwill thus restoring a sense of ‘belonging’ for all. Furthermore, rituals serve to mediate or announce certain dramatic life transitions. This is especially true where the identity status of an individual changes from being married to widowed. Since these transitions are traumatic and often leave the subject feeling swept up, helpless and out of control, rituals and ceremonies tend to return a sense of power and command. It was also revealed that the fasting and consuming of ‘spice-free’ food had a profound effect on the mood and behaviour of those grieving. The individuals who had partaken of the food were described as being calm and ‘in control’ thereby allowing them an opportunity to go through the motions with minimal difficulties. I would like to conclude with Driver’s (1991) assertion that, “it seems clear that rituals and ceremonies may not be deemed ‘necessary’ in the sense that religion is an internal experience and communion with one’s Supreme Being” and this certainly does not require any outward or physical demonstration.
They do, however, serve an important need for humans. They help to create social order and continuity, they link an individual’s emotional, spiritual and physical life with the community’s collective experiences, and they smooth and dignify transitions that occur throughout life (Matheny; 1993:6).

5.4 Guidelines for Educational Psychologists

One of the sub-aims of this study, as stated in chapter one, was the formulation of possible guidelines for educational psychologists for the incorporation of certain rituals and ceremonies into the western form of psychotherapy if needed. While this study focussed primarily on the development of guidelines for educational psychologists whose scope of interest covers children within the education domain, the guidelines that have been formulated can be used by both, educational psychologists as well as other therapists who provide psychotherapy to clients from the Hindi speaking community. It appears that from the research and themes which emerged, as presented in this study, the performance of rituals and ceremonies is integral during the grieving process of the Hindi speaking community.

The following guidelines are offered in an attempt to outline how educational psychologists or other therapists could use certain rituals and ceremonies when providing therapeutic intervention. Since various psychologists employ different techniques depending on their paradigmatic framework, rituals and ceremonies can be employed in almost all the various approaches.

The Rogerian client-centred approach has as its main goal, the provision of a climate of safety and trust in the therapeutic setting where the client uses the therapeutic relationship for self-exploration. The core conditions, which Rogers considers imperative in all helping relationships, are genuineness, warmth and empathy (see chapter 2:33). Since this approach postulates that one can direct one’s own life, it supports the Hindu clients’ belief of the Law of Karma which dictates that each individual is responsible for his or her own actions. It is essential that educational psychologists should strive to understand their clients and their problem situations contextually. They should make every effort to understand the worldviews of their clients hence, Rogers argues that “the relationship that develops between counsellor and client is the most significant agent for change, not the counsellor’s repertoire of techniques” (Bayne et al, 1994:15). In terms of the performance of the various rituals and ceremonies amongst the Hindi
clients, the educational psychologist has to place the needs of the client first; identify and focus on whatever frame of reference, self definition or belief system is central to any given client; select counselling interventions on the basis of the client’s agenda and avoid cultural stereotyping. It is imperative that the therapist recognise that within group differences are often more extensive than between group differences (Egan, 2002:52). When counselling the Hindi client from a client-centred perspective, the therapist will meet the client where s/he is. The counsellor’s respect for cultural diversity, along with the myriad rituals and ceremonies, will ensure that clients are afforded an opportunity to deal with grief the way s/he [client] feels most comfortable. Very often, it is doing ‘things’ which are familiar, relevant and congruent with experiences from home. These ‘things’ are more often than not, the various rituals and ceremonies. It is only in a climate of positive acceptance that change can happen. As psychologists, we need to be constantly aware that we cannot change others; we can help others to change themselves. We cannot tell them in which way they should change; we can, with care, help them to see the world around them in a more realistic light. We can help others to see their feelings, memories and fears in perspective; we cannot tell them how they should be feeling and remembering. In this regard, as psychologists, “we need to be experiencing a positive, acceptant attitude towards whatever the client is at that moment” (Tschudin, 1997:66).

Approaching grief counselling from a psychoanalytical perspective, the therapist could make use of various techniques. The psychoanalytical therapist stresses social and cultural factors. The primary goal of therapy is to make the unconscious conscious. In the case of counselling the Hindi client, there may be repressed anger or pain, which could be released through open displays such as crying and retelling the story, which promotes catharsis. The therapist could make use of free association where terminology relating to the various rituals and ceremonies or the tenets of Hinduism could be used. Past life therapy is a holistic therapy that is based on the principle of cause and effect [also known as Karma]. Hypnosis, on the other hand, is an altered state of consciousness during which previously inaccessible memories are accessed while hypnotic regression deals with ‘taking the subject back’ or regressed to another lifetime. These techniques, both past life therapy and hypnotic regression could be used with great success by the psychoanalytical therapist since it lends itself exceptionally well to the Hindi belief of reincarnation and the law of karma. A client could be ‘taken back’ to complete the rituals and
ceremonies that may not have been done and is being considered the cause of present day
difficulties of ‘letting go’ for the client.

The Adlerian approach is mainly concerned with challenging clients mistaken notions and faulty
assumptions. This approach promotes the belief that people are in control of their fate, not mere
victims of it. This could be closely associated with the Hindu belief that each individual
determines his or her own karma [destiny]. The techniques of homework assignment could be
used very effectively. The client could be asked to find a mantra or a favourite miniature deity
(or picture thereof) which could be used to provide support and strength whenever the client
perceives any threat of being overwhelmed with painful memories or thoughts. S/he could be
encouraged to reach for it [the symbol] or recite the mantra to ‘draw’ courage from it. In
addition, the client could also be asked to find out the symbolic meanings of the various deities
and choose one which symbolically represents the immediate need of the client, for example, if
the client is fearful, then one which denotes strength and power could be used.

In the Gestalt approach, the emphasis is placed on the client remaining ‘figure’. This means,
remaining in the forefront of the therapist’s attention while models and theories about clients
remain ‘grounded’, which is knowledge that remain in the background and used only in the
interest of understanding and helping the unique client. This approach allows the incorporation
of the various rituals and ceremonies to fit in very well. The therapist could make use of guided
imagery or visualisation to ‘take’ the client to a ‘safe place’ for meetings with the deceased. In
addition, it has already been explained in chapter two that, when a person dies, the family sets up
an altar with a photograph of the deceased. A lamp is lit and water and food is offered daily at
the altar. It could be extremely helpful, should a client come for therapy before the end of the
mourning period [thirteen days after death], to set up an altar and request that the client bring
along a photograph of the significant other [photo of happy times]. Each time the client comes
for therapy, s/he could begin the session by lighting the lamp, offering the water followed by a
brief ‘conversation’ with the bereaved using the photograph as a medium to communicate.
Furthermore, the therapist could make use of bibliotherapy where stories or parables from the
scriptures could be read and discussed. This could be extremely useful for explaining the process
of reincarnation or the journey of the soul. Very often, these stories have pictures and
explanations of processes that children are familiar within their home context.
Since the Hindu client believes that the soul is reincarnated, the client can be afforded the opportunity of ‘deciding’ what form s/he ‘thinks’ the deceased has taken and could be assisted or encouraged to actually make an artefact that resembles the ‘believed to be’ image. The client could then, if for example the image is a bird, talk to it, and then, when the client is ready, to symbolically ‘release’ it. Alternatively, the artefact could be kept as a medium the client can use to ‘talk to’ or ‘communicate’ with the deceased. This could also be placed on a chair – similar to the empty chair technique – and the ‘object’ could be seated and ‘spoken’ to.

During play therapy, the psychologist could create a scene of either the cremation or the post cremation process, with all the necessary substances and scents, and have the client literally perform a few of the rituals or ceremonies they may deem important to fulfill their sense of duty. In addition, the therapist could also incorporate the process of committing the body to the five elements as stated in chapter two, which the Hindi believes the body to comprise.

Using narrative therapy, the psychologist could encourage the client to journal the various rituals and ceremonies with emphasis on what it has done to allow the client to reconnect with the deceased and express any unspoken words or messages. The therapist could also make use of reframing as a strategy. To reframe a past life experience involves changing the ‘lifescipt’. It may entail a change of scenario, replaying it with a different outcome. It may need to be seen from a different perspective. This reframing of the lifescipt can be used effectively when the client is harbouring feelings of guilt for not having completed certain rituals or ceremonies.

It should be borne in mind, as outlined in chapter two, there is a belief that if some of the rituals and ceremonies are not performed, there could be serious repercussions for the surviving sons and close relatives. The performance of some of these rituals, in therapy, could give the client the security of knowing that the family will be safe since s/he had met the obligation of performance. It could work just as effectively, if the lifescipt is then rewritten or reframed to produce a positive outcome.

The therapist using solution-focussed therapy could work with the client by finding ways to identify actions or behaviours that will assist the soul to reach the other dimension as well as managing behaviour of the client that will contribute to a good karma. Rituals and ceremonies for this purpose could be discussed and performed. The therapist could also make use of scaling
questions with emphasis on how the rituals and ceremonies promoted healing. When counselling children, the use of peer support groups could be used quite effectively. Since peer interaction is an important part of the culture of childhood, these support groups could comprise of other children from the Hindi speaking community who had experienced similar losses. This support group could be encouraged to make use of the various rituals and ceremonies as a means of expressing their grief. Their common practices could provide a safe and therapeutic environment in which the client feels less isolated.

Finally, the psychologist could also approach the ‘education phase’ of grief counselling by using the notion of the four different types of personality according to the yogas as discussed in chapter two. When working with the client who is considered to be deeply devotional or emotional [Bhakti Yoga], the psychologist could encourage him/her to seek answers from the scriptures. The client considered the rational type [Jnana Yoga] could be encouraged to find ‘answers’ or ‘solutions’ through thinking, talking or questioning. The client who is inclined towards meditation [Raja Yoga] could be counselled using techniques such as relaxation, music, or meditation. Finally, the worker or active person [Karma Yoga] could be encouraged to find ‘answers’ or ‘solution’ through serving man and performing the various rituals and ceremonies.

The above mentioned guidelines aim to show how rituals and ceremonies can be incorporated into the various counselling approaches.

5.5. Limitations of the study

The ultimate goal of research is to provide the academic world with credible findings. This is difficult for the novice researcher who is often hampered by limitations. By describing the data collection procedure and methods of analysis and interpretation in detail, however, the novice researcher attempts to ensure objectivity and reliability. This process refers to the gathering of data, its analysis and interpretation, but it also, in part, refers to an honest discussion of the limitations of the study.

This study was conducted with participants from a specific area, Lenasia, and a specific religious group, from the Hindi-speaking community. Given a different set of circumstances with Hindi speaking participants from a different province or area, the results may have been different.
Another very important limitation lies in the fact that a novice researcher conducted the research with no previous experience in research together with the fact that I had been dealing with a very sensitive issue. Consequently, many unintentional errors may have been made. Through continuous reflection and correction of these errors both the study as well as the researcher were enriched. Errors are still, however, possible.

5.6. Recommendations for further research

Recommendations are made with the purpose of making suggestions for further research.

Application possibilities in terms of further research includes:

(i) Qualitative empirical research covering a much more wider population than just those confined to the Lenasia area. Since there appears to be different practices in Johannesburg as compared to Durban, perhaps a study including participants from both provinces could be included.

(ii) A qualitative comparative study of the various cultural practices performed by the different religious groups with the aim of determining commonalities. This could then form the basis for developing multicultural grief counselling models specifically focussing on the South African context.

(iii) A prolonged study of the various models in contemporary psychotherapeutic grief counselling process and how the various rituals and ceremonies could be incorporated in each ‘stage’ or phase of the counselling process.

5.7 Final Comments

In this chapter, the results of the analysed and interpreted data were discussed, within the framework of existing theory, as presented in chapter two. Based on the themes that emerged, possible guidelines for educational psychologists were made. Possible areas of further research were suggested and the limitations of the study were stated.

Working from a constructivist paradigm (as outlined in chapter one) where the researcher is one with the process of inquiry and not a separate component, I have found that my general
ignorance about the Hindi beliefs and tenets, prior to this study, could have resulted in me making many unfounded and untrue assumptions and stereotypes. This study has been an opportunity for tremendous growth for me both personally and professionally. This brings to mind the sentiments expressed by Cook and Oltjenbruns (1998:106) that, “given the diversity of heritages, it is crucial that individuals providing support to bereaved persons who are from cultural backgrounds different from their own understand that what may be out of the realm of ‘normal’ in their own individual experience may be normal and even expected within another person’s cultural realm”.

Finally, when I reflect on this study in its totality, it becomes clear as stated in Frankel (1997:65) that, “the conviction that exploring the issues of death may help each of us identify our values, priorities and goals in life and (thereby) enhance the quality of our everyday living by giving it deeper meaning”.

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APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advaita : a school of Vedanta philosophy, teaching the oneness of God, and tamas. Tamas stands for inertia or dullness, rajas for activity the self, Soul, indwelling spirit

Agni : the fire element

Atma : the part of love, one of the four fundamental types of spiritual

Bhagavad Gita : God as the creator, the name of the creator aspect of God

Bhakti Yoga : the highest plane of existence

Brahma : Impersonal God, the Absolute Reality ceremonies, a sweet rice ball.

Brahmaloka : (literally: that which holds up the existence of anything), Essential discipline

Bhakti Yoga : property or characteristic trait, any of the three subtle substances

Brahman : Holy words

Dharma : the path of Knowledge, one of the four fundamental types of

Guna : the path of right action, one of the four fundamental types of action, deed, work, result or effect of action

Jnana Yoga : Mahabarata

Karma Yoga : a sacred formula to be uttered in connection with rituals, also a set

Karma : liberation from all kinds of bondage, liberation attained through

Mantra : Nature or restlessness and sattva for balance, harmony or righteousness

Moksha : an offering to the pitrs in several rites, especially during funeral

Pinda : ancestor, favourable or unfavourable state of the deceased people

Pitr : abode of the pitr

Pitrloka : Quality, religion, code of duties, duty.

Raja Yoga : the path of Mental Concentration, one of the four fundamental

Rajas : one of the three subtle substances constituting Prakriti or Mother

Shaucha(asauca) : purification of body and mind

Shiva : one of the Hindu Trinity representing God as the Destroyer

Shraddha : Implicit faith in one’s teacher or other respected people

Shruti : (literally: anything heard) revealed knowledge, the Vedas Soul and the universe Spiritual discipline Spiritual discipline spiritual enlightenment types of spiritual discipline

Vaishnava : a Hindu sect worshipping God as Vishnu Waiting for rebirth which constitutes Prakriti or Mother Nature. According to Sankya philosophy, Prakriti consists of three gunas known as sattva, rajas


APPENDIX 2: Extract from Interview 1 – Transcript 1

R: Before you go into the mourning period, elaborate a bit on the immediately actions taken when someone dies. What is done immediately after that. You have spoken of the crematorium and what is done when you come home. What is done just on hearing that someone is dead. What is the first thing that is done immediately after that?

Mr X: When someone immediately passes away, the first thing is - if it is a natural death at home, you have to get a doctor to certify that the person has died and of what illness and to issue a death certificate. You then have to contact the undertakers. They will arrange for moving the body to the mortuary. That is what we had to do. The customary thing for Indians was to bring the body home. That was in the old days. We bring the body home and we lay it down facing where the sun rises and we keep it here – it depends on how long the family wants us to keep it, usually a couple hours. If it is going to be overnight then preferentially the body is moved to the mortuary by the undertakers. Immediately then you approach the priest to make the necessary arrangements for the funeral to take place. An arrangement is made with the undertakers – they have to find out if the crematorium is available and so on.

When you arrange with the priest, you arrange your own time – you do not have to go according to the time the priest specifies to you, although some people do. They find out if it is a good time or a bad time. I am personally not a believer of bad or good times so we just ascertain from the priest as to whether he is available at a certain time. In that all the family come together and we notify all our relatives and friends of the time of the funeral.

Mr X: Early part of the morning of the funeral, if, as in the case where my wife passed away, the ladies – close family, her sisters, my sisters, and whoever would like to go along, go down to the undertakers to bathe the body. All the facilities are there, therefore the bath the body at the mortuary. They use a bucket of water and a clean cloth as well a substance called thill(sesame seeds) which they mix in the water for purification. After they have bathed the body they then use ghee [processed butter], which they smear all over the main parts of the body like the face, eyes and legs. That too is for purification. Then there is an option – I wanted my wife to be cremated in a white linol cloth[calico] but unfortunately the family decided that she must be dressed in one of her best saris and I finally agreed to that. After they dressed her at the funeral parlor, arrangements are made with the undertakers to bring the body home at a stipulated time. When the body comes home, it is usually left in the coffin, on the coffin stand and the “house people” perform certain rituals before the priest arrives. I, then had to remove the red sandoor(powder) that appeared on my wife’s forehead because the day that I got married to her – that was the significance that we are married. All Hindus wear the red dot on the forehead or they have the sandoor on their heads – the middle pathway of head. That I had to remove by wiping it off so that it showed that now I am now a widower. Then we sit around the coffin whilst we are waiting for time. People sit around and sing the Bhajans(hymns) This consoles the family. People sing the Bhajans they volunteer to sing a few hymns as you may call it. Just before the coffin is picked up for the funeral to take place, the priest comes in. The priest does a certain prayer. He uses paddy rice – that is flour rice that is made up of 5 it is called (pindas) and that he puts one under the head of the deceased, two at the feet of the deceased and two under the arms of the deceased.
days according to gender, female, mother or father. You got to go on up to 9th day when that day there is a ceremony also. For ladies, it is 9 days for male it is 10 days.

R: what is the discrepancy, the difference for male and female
Mr Y: they cannot explain, this is where we have been questioning the priest and everybody, they cannot explain. So there has been a lot of controversy with regard to death. But like I have explained you, we are carrying on with this custom and tradition and with the younger people they don't understand these things, there's no real logic to the whole thing. But is carried on as custom and tradition so we have been following it that way.

No on the 9th day for the female or 10th day for the male, this is where the sons of the house have to go and they have made facilities at the crematorium where you have to keep your beard, shave, bath and you have to take your hair off and you sit for another ceremony for that day. What has been explained there is done for the soul or for the person who has passed on. The 10th day is male and the 9th day is for females. So after they have shaven their heads and had a bath they come back home and they partake of meal. The food has been taken out, had been cooked and also offered to the person who has passed on. Now this practice has been carried on.

R: You are saying only sons do these things.
Mr Y: Yes
R: Is there any reason why sons and not daughters?
Mr Y: That's a very good question, and it has also not been explained by our learnt people, the priests, and whoever is learned, they have never explained these things. So this is where the controversy starts with the younger people, they are questioning these things. There is a change that is coming in now, we talking about the 9 days for ladies and 10 days for males. So and then there’s another day that’s coming after the 10 days, it’s the 12 days for ladies and 13 days for men. According to the priest why we do that ceremony, it’s a prayer that we now getting back onto prayer and the mourning period ends at that time.

R: tell me a little about the ceremony, what actually happens and what is that they do and why do they do these things?
Mr Y: You see the 9 or 10 day ceremony there is certain rice balls that they make, 16 or it.
R: Is this for the 9 and 12 day ceremonies?
Mr Y: Yes, and the sons of the house maybe 2,3,4,or 5 , they will sit and they have to go through this ceremony. The priest will read the necessary mantras, you know mantras which is, how will we say, related to this ceremony. So the so-called pinda [its made with rice flour] and is put on a tray and is put on bitter leaves[ kush] each one and every time they put on the one, certain prayer's got to .... Until the 16 is finish. 1 up to 16. Then they put on to this rice ball, money, copper, they put that on , then together with it goes some rice, adding to it they will put perfume, honey, sugar, and that’s about all. And when this is done with, the 16 balls, it is being offered to some deities, the first 6 and the rest is offered to the deceased. So what they are trying to tell us that these things are being offered because of the soul going away so when they soul goes away it goes onto a certain plane, it doesn’t completely move away from the house. This is the reason why they are doing this prayer. So when they are doing this prayer, on that day all the mantras
APPENDIX 4: Extract from Interview 3 — Transcript 3

Mr Z: alright, now you got to understand there's nothing prescribed but what the scriptures do tell you is that this is the time, when a family is grieving, and of course you must know the experience is most traumatic, there is nothing better than 'satsang', and this is not a trend but this is a world-wide acceptance that your local priest will obviously come, even without inviting him, he knows, this is the period he goes there and he will read two important scriptures, he reads either from the Ramayan or fro the Bhagavad Gita. And generally what happens, is from the Gita, they read on chapter two which is entitled the chapter on knowledge that death is but a passing phase. It is not the death of the soul, remember that the soul is immortal it is the body that has departed. So the priest uses that period and tries to enlighten the family. Or if another priest might use the Ramayan they will also refer back to the chapter where Lord Rama's father, Disirut passed away, now that is the chapter and the procedure followed. Now incidentally there is quite a bit of debate going on today, not only in JHB, in Durban, wherever there are Hindus. Is where does one count from. Does one count the 10 and 13 day ceremony from the day of death or the day of disposal. Now those of us who have our faith in scriptures obviously follows the scriptural injunctions which say that day of disposal is called... From it from that day that we start counting. Let me give you an analogy in life, I might know a lady is pregnant. I know she is pregnant, we tells, we feel, medical science gives us x-rays and everything. You and I know that the child is there, for all official purposes we do not say, ok the child is 1 day or 2 days old. We only say the child is a day old when the child physically makes an appearance on earth. When she has actually left the mother's womb. Although we know that prior to birth, 10 seconds before birth we know that the child is alive, that there is a heart beating there, so why did we not say that the child is 10 seconds old, why 2 months before the birth of the child do we not say that the child is 2 months old. We only say when the child has made a physical appearance. Likewise the opposite of it counts, is that when this body has physically disintegrated, that is the day that is what the scriptures call a period of 'su-tak' the Sanskrit word is "su-tik' is that this period of 'uncleanness' has set into the house and this is what takes us up to the 10th day. That this period the family has undergone, or should I say the family's home is not clean for you know, the auspicious prayers and everything, you know like the lighting of the lamp, your 'satsang'and all those things, you know, we don't have them. So that is how you count.

R: ok, I think from some of the readings that I've been doing and the interviews, there is this whole thing around why we are performing these rituals, and I think you have alluded to the fact that we do it for the soul.

Mr Z: yes you are doing it for the departed soul. You are doing nothing for yourself. If I did, look even ... one of the things here, madam is, what I would like to explain here is, you get here for example, intuitive and transcendental knowledge, you know the Almighty is so infinite and you and I on earth are functioning with a finite brain. Do we have the ability to think infinitely. Because there are scriptures, saints and sages that had intuition and they have given us these directions, and therefore, look, I don't have that knowledge of what I'm doing is right or wrong but what harm will come to me...
APPENDIX 5: Extract from Interview 4 — Transcript 4

R: Namaste Punditjee, I’m going to ask you a few questions about somebody that is mourning, somebody who has lost somebody, ok. Now you’ve been a priest who’s done some of the ceremonies. So for you to just tell us what happens when someone immediately dies. What are some of the rituals and ceremonies that are performed?

P: after they die, people, will do prayers, they make the prayers, they prepare the pindas, then they put in the box... First let them bring Gangal [water from the Ganges], you know Gangal, for the prayers, then you put in the mouth and the tulsi leaves also. After that you put the flower in respect of the body, respect for the atma, the soul. While we do the pinda, because it signifies ... then the men is coming birth is just like the pinda, after the 9/10 months is already ready for birth. In addition, after they take the body they put the pinda in the box after that people take the flower, it is out of respect, it is like the last journey. Then whatever you make, like sweet ... A piece of salt, after finish then you put the coconut also, coconut just like ...

R: Just like?

P: It’s our religion

R: coconut is very holy......and after that you take the body whatever your prayers and cremate ...there you just do the prayers...

R: OK, so after the body is cremated?

P: after the body ... before the body, put there so people like together to make the prayers of the last ... to make peace for the soul. Then after that people put the flower and then after that they put it in the fire.

R: and then...what other ceremonies are performed?

P: after that... if you got time then you just do the ... at home like a light to Brahma... then --after 12 days you just make the pinda

R: and then that is as far as the priest is concerned. There’s no 1 year, 6 months ceremony?

P: after... first you do the 12 days pinda after you just make the 3 months, 6 months, 1 year. That one was Shree Sharadha...

R: ok tell me a little bit about that 12 day or 13 day ceremony, what is it that you do?

P: it is important like Shardhu, it is important because after the 12 days the atma is here then it is going piece of the way. 12 days is Shradakarma in Hindi, the Vishnu is most important. It’s meaning of Shardhakarma, you do it with the fate, whatever prayers you do, after the 12 days, with faith and confidence and the atma is totally is get peace.

R: oh, so you do it to sent the atma off for peace,

P: yes, that is he meaning of the Shradakarma, will count 12 days, but in actually what is Shradakarma. Vishnu Pooja is the most important, after you do the Vishnu pooja you do the thirinjali...
resolved or they haven’t healed or they haven’t let go of the person who’s passed away and we also believe our religion is based on attachments, our relationships rather is based on attachments. One of the things that our religion teaches us is that attachments is hurtful and we all come alone and we die alone and we have this relationship with people. Because that is what mankind’s philosophy is… that no man is an island. And therefore you are born into a family as a wife, a brother, a sister. And there are reasons why you have these relationships and the deeds that you do will make you … will let your soul go into something that is better … it takes millions of lives…. You have to be in millions of lives before you can come back as a human. And we say that human is the most intelligent … so for you to be a human being, you have choices, and you are different from animal. In addition, because of that, they explain that whatever you do good, will always make you go to the highest level of divinity. So everything you do, your deeds, you take your deeds but you would not take you material goods.

R: am I hearing you right when you say that humankind is the highest level.

GP: Yes, it’s so-called.

R: So it’s equivalent to divinity?

GP: no it is not equivalent to divinity.

R: Okay, just clarify.

GP: Being a human being means that you have thinking abilities and you can make choices, where you find that when I say choices, you can choose not to kill someone. You can choose not to have war, you can choose not to murder somebody. You can choose not to rape somebody and because we have those kinds of choices, our goal on life is for you to do good, living in a spiritual world eventually. However, those choices are made by human beings themselves. Obviously you can’t expect them to be them to be religious beings on a full time basis I mean we are living in a materialistic world, we …

R: Okay, we are going to sketch a hypothetical scenario. Assume you are counselling a family who has just been very recently bereaved, and they are sitting with issues. Now you have some understanding around the rituals and ceremonies, or the practices of the Hindi faith and you have an understanding of psychotherapy, of bereavement therapy as such. Do find that there is a place for these rituals in a session as such.

GP: Yes, but it would not be initially. It won’t be an initial session. Obviously the first few sessions depending on the faith of the person… and depending on how emotionally attached was the person, how has it affected the person. In addition, there is definitely a place for religion.

R: Okay. Sketch how you would actually use some of that in therapy as such.

GP: Okay, the religious aspects as such. If say, you are working with cognition, the cognitive therapy where you have explain to that person how the person died, depending on the circumstances, depending on the case, whether it was a child, whether it was an adult, um… unexpected, whether it was an ill person or whatever. So that will determine a lot of how your therapy session is going. And what helps the person himself or herself. Maybe it is the ritual, you could ask ‘how does he deal with it, what can help him to deal with loss’ I mean that is very important.

R: my sense is that you talking from a client-centred approach.