

Exploring Psychological Resilience and Meaning-Making in Hindu Bhakti Practices: An Examination of Devotional Experience, Ritual Participation and Neuropsychological Adaptation

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Abstract:

The Hindu bhakti traditions are traditionally significant psychological, social, and spiritual assets of the South Asian society. Over the past few decades, there has been an increase in academic interest in the connection between devotional practices and psychological well-being, especially regarding the topics of resilience, emotional regulation, coping, and meaning-making. This cross-disciplinary review looks at how Hindu devotional practices like kirtan (devotional chanting), japa (mantra repetition), puja (ritual worship), darshan (sacred viewing), meditation, pilgrimage and satsang (spiritual gatherings) can lead to adaptive psychological functioning. Based on the religious psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, sociology, and Hindu philosophy, the article discusses the effects of devotional engagement on emotional processing, social bonding, cognitive reframing, and neurophysiological regulation. Special attention is given to the psychological roles of karma, dharma, surrender, reincarnation, and attachment to the divine in the formation of the reaction to suffering and misfortune. The neurobiological impacts of chanting and meditative processes are also reviewed such as stress reduction, attentional control, and neuroplasticity related to mantra recitation. Besides, the article critically analyzes the drawbacks and dangers of devotional coping, such as spiritual bypassing, fatalism, and negative religious coping. The results indicate that bhakti traditions are a multidimensional resilience model that incorporates emotional, cognitive, social, physiological and spiritual aspects of human experience. The paper ends by emphasizing the significance of culturally sensitive mental health research, and interdisciplinary methods of studying religion and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Bhakti, Hindu Devotion, Psychological Resilience, Religious Coping, Meaning-Making, Spirituality, Neuroscience of Religion, Hindu Psychology, Emotional Regulation, Ritual Participation

Introduction

Hinduism is a very large and diverse spectrum of philosophical systems, ritual traditions, and spiritual practices that define the lived experiences of millions of people in the world. One of its numerous spiritual paths, bhakti, or the path of devotion and emotional submission to the divine, holds a rather dominant place in the life of Hinduism, both past and present. Bhakti traditions focus on close, personal connections with deities like Krishna, Rama, Shiva and Devi by means of prayer, chanting, worship in temples, story telling, music, pilgrimage and community involvement. Bhakti emphasizes emotional bonding, surrender, and relational spirituality as the key means of transcendence and liberation, unlike purely ritualistic or ascetic traditions (Verma, 2023; Prentiss, 2000).

Traditionally, the Bhakti movement arose between the sixth and seventeenth centuries CE as a revolutionary devotional movement that opposed strict caste hierarchies and the exclusivity of rites. Forms of devotion that stressed accessibility, emotional expression and direct divine connection were popularized by poet-saints like Mirabai, Tulsidas, Kabir, Andal, Surdas and the Alvars. Bhakti traditions democratized spirituality through devotional songs, poetry, and communal worship and offered social and emotional inclusion to marginalized social groups, such as women and lower-caste communities (Das, 2023).

Devotional practices remain in modern society as highly internalized cultural systems of emotional regulation, social support, and meaning-making. Blistering urbanization, social disintegration, economic stress, isolation, and mental health issues have led to an academic focus on the psychological roles of spirituality and religious involvement. In this context, Hindu devotional practices are not only systems of theology but also systems of psychology where people make sense of suffering and build identity and resilience (Rahayu, 2025; Glushkova, 2025).

Psychological resilience is the dynamic ability to successfully adapt to adversity, stress, trauma, and uncertainty. Meaning-making is the process of thinking and feeling that people engage in to make sense of challenging experiences in coherent systems of purpose and meaning (Munshi & Bhagwan, 2025). Hindu devotional traditions offer several philosophical and ritual processes that enable such processes. The notions of karma, dharma, reincarnation, surrender, and equanimity provide the systems of interpretation according to which suffering can be redefined and psychologically addressed (Kumar et al., 2024).

In contrast to strictly biomedical or secular cognitive theories of mental health, bhakti incorporates emotional catharsis, social connection, ritual embodiment, devotion to the divine, philosophical contemplation, and neurophysiological regulation. The devotional participation is thus a simultaneous process on the emotional, cognitive, social, biological and spiritual levels (Dolcos et al., 2021).

The current review seeks to explore the role of Hindu devotional practices in promoting psychological resilience and meaning-making through synthesizing the evidence provided by religious psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, sociology, and Hindu philosophy. In particular, the article aims to:

1. Analyze psychological processes of devotional coping and emotional regulation.
2. Research the neurophysiological impact of chanting, meditation and ritual attendance.
3. Discuss the sociocultural aspect of communal devotion and ritual identity.
4. Explore philosophies that inform the understanding of suffering and adversity.

5. Critically assess the advantages and shortcomings of devotional coping.
6. Comment on implications of culturally sensitive mental health research and practice.

Theoretical Framework

The current review is based on three theoretical perspectives that are interrelated: religious coping theory, attachment theory, and cognitive reframing theory. Collectively, the frameworks offer a multidimensional perspective on understanding the role of Hindu devotional practices in resilience and psychological adjustment.

Religious Coping Theory

Religious coping theory is a theory that was developed mainly by Pargament (1997) and it postulates that religion acts as a meaning-making system in which people perceive and react to stressors in life. Religious beliefs and practices affect emotional regulation, coping mechanisms, social identity and existential knowledge. Positive religious coping is usually characterized by a search of spiritual support, collaborative relationships with the divine, and redefining adversity with significant religious stories. Negative religious coping, in its turn, can be characterized by a sense of punishment, desertion, powerlessness, or spiritual discontent (Graça & Brandão, 2024).

In Hindu devotional traditions, religious coping often takes the form of prayer, chanting, surrender, pilgrimage, and devotional service. Emotional catharsis and psychological reassurance in practices like kirtan and japa, and interpretive frameworks in philosophical concepts like karma and dharma, provide devotees with cognitive means of organizing suffering and uncertainty (Perera et al., 2018; Ivanova, 2023).

Attachment Theory and God Relationships

Another valuable theory to explain devotional experience is the attachment theory. Attachment theory, which was initially formulated to describe emotional attachment between caregivers and children, has been used more and more to describe spiritual and religious attachments. The deity in bhakti traditions is often perceived as a parent, protector, beloved, friend or guide. These emotionally intimate relations serve as attachment-like security that comforts in times of uncertainty, grief, fear, or isolation (Granqvist et al., 2010).

The bhakti emotion is especially manifested in the tradition of Navavidha Bhakti which describes nine types of devotional practices, such as hearing sacred stories, chanting, prayer, service, remembrance, and surrender. These practices enable the devotees to develop a very internalized connection with the divine that can act as a psychological secure base. People in emotional distress or social exclusion, the divine attachment can be used to offset the lack of firm interpersonal support networks. Such an attachment-based concept of devotion can be used to understand why bhakti practices are frequently linked to decreased loneliness, emotional security, and existential stability (Kimball et al., 2013).

Philosophical Meaning-Making and Cognitive Reframing

Cognitive reframing theory underlines the importance of interpretation to influence emotional reactions to adversity. Hindu philosophical traditions offer numerous cognitive frameworks that enable meaning-making and emotional adjustment (Park, 2022). Karma is one of the most powerful ideas in this context, as it is a moral causality that leads to suffering instead of chance. Even though karma is occasionally

misunderstood as fatalistic, the Hindu philosophy usually holds that the current action determines the future, and thus, the agency and responsibility is retained (Lau & Tov, 2023).

The Bhagavad Gita also adds to the psychological resilience by the notions of sthitaprajna (equanimity) and nishkama karma (detached action). Equanimity promotes emotional equilibrium in the face of success and failure, whereas detached action focuses on ethical action without over-identification with results. These principles, when combined, help to reduce the anxiety related to performance, stimulate acceptance, and enhance emotional regulation (Van Tongeren & Van Tongeren, 2021; Brady, 2025).

These interrelated theoretical approaches help to comprehend Hindu devotional traditions as not only systems of belief, but as holistic psychological constructs that shape the emotional processing, coping, identity formation, and resilience.

Literature Review

Religious Psychology, Devotional Coping and Emotional Regulation

Religion and psychological well-being have emerged as a more and more important topic of research in the modern psychology. Religions offer structures of meaning, emotional warmth, social identification, and existential direction that define the way people react to misfortune and ambiguity. In Hindu devotional practices, bhakti is not just a spiritual pathway, but a culturally encoded coping mechanism that shapes cognition, emotional regulation and resilience (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005).

The theory of religious coping by Pargament suggests that religion is an orienting system that helps people to make sense of life stressors and devise coping mechanisms to adapt to the same. Religious coping may be adaptive or dysfunctional in relation to how one perceives the involvement of the divine, agency, and suffering. The positive religious coping tends to involve invoking spiritual assistance, praying, joint problem-solving with the divine, and redesigning adversity in significant religious scripts. In contrast, negative religious coping can entail a sense of divine punishment, abandonment, guilt, helplessness, or spiritual dissatisfaction (Wnuk, 2024; Pargament et al., 1998).

It has been proposed that positive devotional coping is associated with less psychological distress, emotional stability, resilience, optimism, and adaptive stress management. Devotional engagement enables people to make sense of suffering in philosophical and spiritual ways, which diminishes the state of existential uncertainty and enhances the sense of meaning. In comparison, negative religious coping is linked to anxiety, emotional distress, passivity, and decreased coping efficacy (Surzykiewicz et al., 2022; Ghorbani et al., 2017).

Table 1- Factors of the Hindu Religious Coping Scale and Mental Health Outcomes

Coping Factor	Psychological Mechanism	Psychological Outcome
God-focused coping	Seeking divine guidance, protection, and emotional reassurance	Increased resilience, optimism, and emotional stability
Spirituality-focused coping	Meditation, prayer, transcendence, and meaning-making	Greater self-acceptance and adaptive coping

Coping Factor	Psychological Mechanism	Psychological Outcome
Religious guilt, anger, and passivity	Feelings of punishment, helplessness, or abandonment	Increased distress, anxiety, and maladaptive coping

Devotional expression is also an important source of insights into emotional regulation in Bhakti traditions. In contrast with the traditions that focus on emotional suppression or detachment, bhakti promotes emotional involvement with the divine by chanting, singing, narration, prayer, and submission. Kirtan and bhajan are practices that provide structured spaces where devotees can express grief, longing, joy, fear, devotion and vulnerability without fear. Such emotional catharsis can alleviate mental tension and create interpersonal connectedness (Park et al., 2017).

The daily devotional practices also promote gratitude, humility, forgiveness, compassion, and surrender, which have always been linked to the long-term psychological health. The monotony and order of the ritual practice also helps in stabilizing emotions as they provide predictability, continuity and a feeling of sacred order in normal life.

Divine Relationships and Attachment Theory

The attachment theory is another theory that can be used to explain the psychological meaning of the devotional experience. Devotees in bhakti traditions often view the deity as a caring, protective, and emotional being. The deity can be felt like a parent, companion, beloved, or friend and as a result, a relationship of attachment is formed and this provides a sense of comfort during times of distress (Granqvist et al., 2010).

This dynamic of attachment is particularly pronounced in Vaishnava devotional cultures with Krishna and Rama as their focus, where emotional closeness and submission are the primary concern of spiritual existence. The connection of the devotee with the divine tends to serve as a psychological secure base which offers reassurance, safety and continuation when the relationships in the world become unstable or unavailable (Cherniak et al., 2020).

The Navavidha Bhakti school codifies the devotional practice in nine modes of practice such as hearing sacred narratives, chanting, remembrance, service, worship, prayer, friendship and self-surrender. In these practices, everyday emotional experiences are changed into divine relational experiences that enhance emotional resilience and attachment security (Kimball et al., 2013; Counted et al., 2025).

Navavidha Bhakti and Psychological Functions

Form of Bhakti	Psychological Function	Resilience Outcome
Shravanam (hearing sacred stories)	Narrative meaning-making	Reduced existential uncertainty
Kirtanam (chanting)	Emotional catharsis	Reduced stress and isolation
Smaranam (remembrance)	Cognitive focus and attentional stability	Improved emotional regulation

Pada Sevanam (service)	Humility and empathy	Greater social connectedness
Archanam (ritual worship)	Structured routine	Emotional stability
Vandanam (prayer)	Emotional expression	Hope and reassurance
Dasyam (servitude)	Identity and purpose	Reduced egocentric anxiety
Sakhyam (friendship with deity)	Attachment security	Emotional comfort
Atmanivedanam (self-surrender)	Acceptance and transcendence	Reduced existential fear

The devotion of attachment is also shown in the works of bhakti saints like Mirabai and Tulsidas. Devotional poetry by Mirabai, as an example, does not just describe Krishna as an abstract god, but as a personal emotional being who can give meaning, protection and comfort in the face of social rejection and personal suffering. These devotional stories still have an effect on modern believers because they provide emotionally appealing images of perseverance and submission.

Neurophysiological Regulation and Neuroscience of Religion

Neuroscience of religion has been a growing field of inquiry into the effects of contemplative and devotional practices on brain activity, emotional control, and physiological stress reactions. The Hindu devotional practices are especially informative as they are a combination of meditation, repetition, music, expression of emotions and participation of the community (Perry et al., 2023).

The so-called Sanskrit Effect of Hindu devotional practice, i.e., structural and functional alterations of the brain related to the long-term memorization and recitation of mantras, is one of the most discussed neurophysiological phenomena. It is proposed that the repetitive Vedic recitation and chanting can help in the neuroplasticity of areas related to memory, attentional control and cognition (J. et al., 2025). Mantra repetition over a long period of time seems to reinforce neural circuits that deal with concentrating and memory retention. These results indicate that devotional chanting can help not only in emotional but also in cognitive resilience (Stroope et al., 2019).

Besides structural neuroplasticity, devotional activities like chanting, meditation, and kirtan have also been linked to quantifiable physiological effects, including low cortisol levels, high alpha and theta brain wave activity, lowered amygdala activation, and improved parasympathetic nervous system regulation. These neurophysiological effects are in line with the subjective reports of calmness, emotional stability and transcendence that are often reported by practitioners (Calderone et al., 2024).

Table 3- Neurophysiological Effects of Devotional Practices

Practice	Physiological Change	Psychological Outcome
Chanting and kirtan	Reduced cortisol and increased alpha waves	Stress reduction and emotional calmness

Vedic mantra recitation	Enhanced hippocampal activation and cortical strengthening	Improved memory and attentional control
Group meditation	Increased alpha/theta activity and reduced amygdala activation	Emotional regulation and resilience
Japa meditation	Controlled breathing and parasympathetic activation	Reduced anxiety and intrusive thoughts

The communal aspect of the devotional practice also helps in regulation of the psyche by social means of synchronization. When performed as a group, the chanting and collective engagement in rituals engage reward and bonding systems in the brain. This mirror neuron activity and emotional synchronization may help empathize, experience joint happiness, and social cohesion when sound, movement, and emotion are rhythmically coordinated during kirtan.

Ritual, Embodiment and Social Resilience

The anthropological and sociological approaches underline the fact that Hindu rituals were not just ceremonies but were practices that influenced emotional experience, social identity and strength. The involvement in rituals incorporates physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects into cohesive meaning systems (Santosa et al., 2024). The rituals that have physical endurance like fasting, pilgrimage, fire-walking and carrying kavadi during Thaipusam are of high cost and demonstrate how discomfort of the body can be turned into a sacred experience. Devotees redefine physical pain by chanting, entering a trance, immersion in rhythms, and collective involvement as a sacrifice, cleansing or offering to the deity, instead of suffering without a purpose (Power, 2018; Jackline, 2025).

Investigations of kavadi practices have shown that participants usually mention emotional catharsis, transcendence, empowerment, and post-ritual well-being in spite of profound physical exertion. Such results indicate that cultural meaning systems have a powerful influence on the perception and psychological determination of pain. Sharing of devotional areas are also critical agents of social resilience. Social networks formed through satsangs, temple meetings, pilgrimages and group rituals alleviate the feeling of isolation and strengthens collective identity. This position is particularly important with marginalized groups, such as widows in Vrindavan, economic weaker groups, and socially displaced people (Santiago, 2023). To most widows in devotional societies, attending bhajans, rituals and sharing common worship gives them emotional belonging, social identity, and existential meaning. Devotional participation is thus not only a spiritual activity, but also a way of surviving as a social being and resilience in the form of a community (Firoz & Pratheesh, 2025).

The historical Bhakti movement itself was in part a reaction to strict caste systems and exclusivity of rituals. Bhakti traditions fostered access to spiritual inclusion among women, lower-caste groups, and socially marginalized groups by insisting on emotional devotion rather than ritual privilege. Such

democratizing inheritance has remained in the context of psychological and social implications of devotional attendance in the modern Hindu society (D., 2025).

The Suffering and the Interpretation of Karma

Karma is the notion that serves as one of the most powerful meaning-making processes in Hindu philosophy. Karma is the law of cause and effect, which states that behaviors have effects that affect the current and future experiences. In devotional traditions, karma offers a system by which suffering and misfortune may be interpreted as a component of a greater moral and spiritual working instead of being a meaningless hodgepodge(Goswami, 2025; Khanna & Deswal, 2024).

Table 4- *Philosophical Frameworks and Meaning-Making Strategies*

Philosophical Concept	Meaning-Making Function	Psychological Benefit	Potential Risk
Karma	Explains suffering through moral causality	Acceptance and reduced existential uncertainty	Fatalism and passivity
Dharma	Provides ethical structure and purpose	Stability and responsibility	Excessive duty-related pressure
Reincarnation	Offers long-term existential perspective	Hope and reduced despair	Delayed engagement with present issues
Surrender (Sharanagati)	Encourages trust in divine order	Emotional reassurance	Spiritual bypassing
Equanimity (Sthitaprajna)	Promotes emotional balance	Reduced anxiety and stress reactivity	Emotional suppression if misunderstood

Psychologically, karma can help alleviate existential uncertainty by providing explanations to painful events. People who are faced with sickness, death, failure, or social injustice can explain these circumstances in a causal moral framework, and thus diminish the sense of contingency and powerlessness. This re-framing of the mind usually eases acceptance and adjustment of emotions.

Notably, passive fatalism is not the ultimate idea of classical Hindu philosophy. Even though karma describes the current sufferings by the actions of the past, it also underlines the transformative power of the actions in the present. The present behavior, intentions, and religious practices are thought to be influencing the future, maintaining agency, and holding moral responsibility (Pandya & Bhangaokar, 2025). Nonetheless, researchers have also observed the aspect of maladaptive interpretations of karma that can cause passivity or learned helplessness in people when they view suffering as totally predetermined or unalterable. Religious coping can be psychologically maladaptive, as opposed to resilience-enhancing, in these instances (R., 2025).

Dharma and Psychological Health

Another key meaning-making principle in Hindu traditions is Dharma. Widely perceived as a righteous duty, ethical behavior, and moral order, dharma offers people guidance in how to act and be socially responsible. Dharma also plays a role psychologically in making life resilient by bringing structure, predictability, and purpose. One may find themselves with a sense of direction in times of uncertainty or emotional distress by following their duties and responsibilities. Instead of being paralyzed by fear or bewildered, people are challenged to concentrate on moral action and disciplined involvement in life (Gandhe et al., 2026).

This principle is directly related to the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita on nishkama karma, or detached action. Under this concept, people are expected to work without being too attached to the results. Detached action decreases anxiety, perfectionism and emotional instability by moving the focus off uncontrollable outcomes and onto the ethical effort itself (Whitehead et al., 2018). Cognitively, detached action is similar to modern psychological practice that focuses on mindfulness, present-focused awareness, and acceptance-focused coping. Instead of trying to dominate all the external effects, devotees learn to develop disciplined action with emotional balance (Currier et al., 2022).

Equanimity and Emotions Control

One of the key elements of spiritual maturity as introduced in the Bhagavad Gita is the concept of sthitaprajna or steady wisdom or equanimity. Equanimity is a quality of having emotional balance in the context of pleasure and pain, success and failure, praise and criticism.

Notably, equanimity according to Hindu philosophy does not mean suppression of emotions or indifference. Instead, it is the ability to feel without getting psychologically disturbed and destabilized by them. This difference is especially pertinent in interpreting the emotional form of bhakti that fosters emotional expression and at the same time spiritual centeredness (Ho et al., 2022).

Equanimity can be cultivated in ways that can be useful in enhancing resilience by decreasing emotional reactivity and stress sensitivity. People who put life events into broader spiritual contexts might think less catastrophically and be more tolerant to uncertainty. The association between the practice of contemplation and emotion control is further supported by neuroscientific evidence concerning meditation and chanting. The decrease in cortisol levels, the acceleration of alpha and theta brain waves activity, and the decrease

in amygdala activity during devotional practices are physiological counterparts to the subjective impression of calmness and equilibrium found in Hindu contemplative traditions (Xie, 2023).

Another significant way of making meaning and surviving existentially is the doctrine of reincarnation. Reincarnation provides a spiritual perspective on life that can alleviate existential despair and mortal fear by placing personal life experiences in a longer cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Psychologically, this broadened temporal system enables people to perceive current suffering as a momentary state and not absolute. Sorrow is only a stage in a greater spiritual process instead of the entirety of life. These attitudes can bring hope, patience and endurance in times of suffering (Montero-Marín et al., 2019). The reincarnation belief can also shape attitudes to death and loss since it approaches mortality as a passage and not destruction. Devotional traditions are therefore, frequently used to offer emotionally relevant practices and stories that assist people to overcome bereavement and existential panic (McWhorter, 2025).

Give up and Godly Trust

Sharanagati, or the act of giving up to the divine, takes a pivotal place in most of the bhakti traditions. Surrendering means putting faith in Godly wisdom and embracing oneself in inability to control outer circumstances.

Surrendering can have a psychological impact of lessening chronic anxiety that is related to uncertainty and over-self-control. Through faith in divine direction, believers can have a sense of emotional support and less existential pressure. This procedure is especially noticeable in devotional poetry and songs which focus on relying on divine mercy and sheltering but the issue of giving up can be psychologically troublesome when it is seen to be a passive resignation or shirking duty. Researchers who have written on spiritual bypassing have contended that there are those who might employ the surrender as a way of not having to face unresolved trauma, emotional dilemmas or life issues in the real world. As a result, healthy devotional submission entails a balance between faith and agency (Klein et al., 2023; Dike et al., 2022).

Practical Narratives and Identity

Sacred stories and devotional literature also enable meaning-making in bhakti traditions. The tales of saints like Mirabai, Tulsidas, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and Andal offer symbolic examples on how the devotees conceptualize suffering, devotion, sacrifice and perseverance. According to narrative psychology, human beings create identity by narrating stories that make life experiences to have coherent series. This is why Hindu devotional literature does not just serve as a religious teaching but also as a system of psychological narratives that can assist people to incorporate adversity into logical moral and spiritual frameworks. In her devotional poetry, such as that of Mirabai, social rejection and personal suffering is made into mystical desire and divine closeness. On the same note, Ramcharitmanas by Tulsidas are moral archetypes that inform ethical behavior, emotional perseverance and spiritual aspiration. Those stories are still imprinted on the hearts and the souls of modern believers (Van Gordon et al., 2019).

Bhakti traditions form multidimensional meaning-making systems through philosophical thought, devotional affections, ritual engagements, and sacred narratives that enable emotional stability and existential adjustments in a wide range of social and historical situations (Goswami, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

The current research utilized an interdisciplinary integrative approach in narrative review in order to explore the connection between Hindu devotional practices and psychological resilience. The review synthesizes the literature in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, and Hindu philosophy to create a holistic approach to the role of bhakti practices in emotions regulation, coping, social support, and meaning-making.

It was deemed that a narrative review method is most suitable since the subject matter is characterized by rather wide theoretical, cultural, philosophical and experiential aspects that cannot be sufficiently explored within a framework that is too quantitative. In contrast to meta-analytic methods that are mostly interested in statistical aggregation, the current review gathers empirical data, theoretical insights, ethnographic data, and philosophical explanations into a constitutive framework of analysis.

In order to enhance transparency and systematic organization of the literature selection process, the study used PRISMA-based literature identification and screening of articles during selection and review.

Literature Search Strategy

The relevant literature was found by searching electronic databases in Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and other academic databases in the field of psychology, neuroscience, religious studies, and sociology. References lists, scholarly books and cross-referenced scholarly articles were used to identify additional studies.

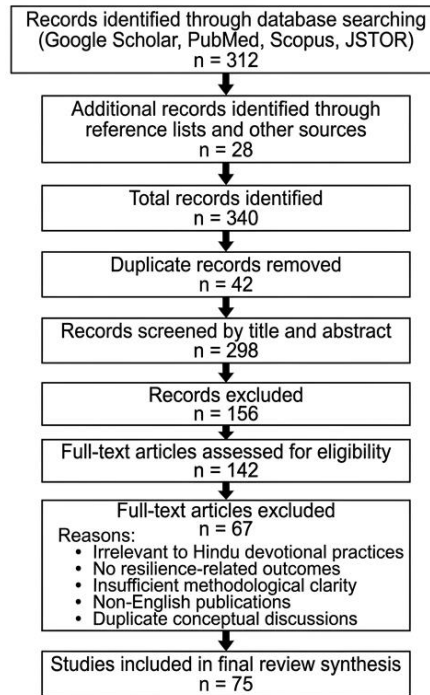
The search was done by entering combinations of keywords and Boolean search operators such as:

- “Hindu Bhakti” and “Psychological Resilience”
- “Religious Coping” and “Hindu Spirituality”
- “Kirtan” and “Mental Health”
- “Chanting” and “Emotional Regulation”
- “Mantra Meditation” and “Neuroscience”
- “Hindu Religious Activities” and “Meaning-Making”
- “Bhagavad Gita” and “Coping”
- “Spirituality” and “Resilience”

The literature search concentrated on English-language studies mainly investigating psychological, neurophysiological, sociological, anthropological or philosophical aspects of Hindu devotional traditions and contemplative methods.

The selection of studies undertook PRISMA-directed screening protocols to facilitate systematic identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of pertinent studies.

Figure 1-PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process



Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the review if they:

1. Studied Hindu religious or philosophical practices.
2. Concerned with psychological strength, emotional control, coping or meaning-making.
3. Singing, meditation, ritual attendance, prayer, pilgrimage or shared devotional activities.
4. Included empirical, theoretical, ethnographic, or interdisciplinary analysis related to spirituality and mental health.
5. Were published in English-language academic journals, books, or scholarly sources.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

1. Focused exclusively on non-Hindu contemplative traditions,
2. Lacked relevance to psychological or resilience-related outcomes,
3. Contained insufficient methodological clarity,
4. Were duplicate conceptual discussions or did not contribute substantially to the aims of the review.

Sources and Analysis of Data

The current review has summarized findings in peer-reviewed journal articles, ethnographic studies, neuroscientific studies, literature on religious psychology, sociological studies, and the Hindu literature.

To guarantee interdisciplinary breadth and conceptual variety, both qualitative and quantitative research were incorporated.

The following factors were used to guide the analysis:

- Religious Coping Theory
- Attachment Theory
- Cognitive Reframing Theory

Instead, the sociocultural and anthropological perspectives are important to the father-son relationship. The role of devotional practices as adaptive or maladaptive coping systems amid adversity was studied with the help of religious coping theory. The attachment theory offered a perspective on the emotional bonds between devotees and gods as attachment-like security. The analysis concerning the role of karma, dharma, surrender, and equanimity as concerns the emotional adaptation and meaning-making was conducted with the help of the cognitive reframing theory.

Anthropological and sociological approaches also helped to comprehend embodiment of rituals, formation of communal identity, and collective resilience of devotional communities.

Narrative Synthesis Procedure

A thematic narrative synthesis was used to analyze the selected literature. The results of psychology, neuroscience, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy were compared and systematized into common thematic groups related to resilience and devotional experience.

The key themes in the analysis were:

- Emotional control by chanting and meditation.
- Neurophysiological adaptivity and stress lessening.
- Ritual embodiment and pain modulation
- Devotional attachment and emotional security

Social bonding, community strength.

- Mental reframing of suffering.
- Philosophical meaning-making

Risks of negative religious coping

Instead of merely trying to compare the statistics, the synthesis placed greater emphasis on conceptual synthesis across disciplines to study the role of devotional practices in affecting the emotional, cognitive, physiological, social, and existential aspects of psychological adaptation.

Ethical Considerations

Since the current research utilised only secondary sources and other academic materials that can be accessed publicly, no formal ethical approval was needed. Care was however taken to present Hindu devotional traditions in a respectful and accurate way whilst being critical of scholarly analysis and interdisciplinary objectiveness.

Methodological Approach limitations

There are various weaknesses linked with the current methodology. To begin with, the research is based excessively on secondary literature, which does not allow producing primary empirical data. Second, the interdisciplinary theme of the review brings about conceptual complexity since various disciplines tend to define spirituality, resilience, and well-being in different ways. Third, the literature about the Hindu devotional practices is largely qualitative or small scale especially in the neuroscientific studies carried out in India.

In spite of these shortcomings, the narrative review methodology enables us to have a holistic view of bhakti as a multidimensional resilience model that cannot be sufficiently explained by a single disciplinary approach.

Findings

The current review has found that there are several common themes that show that Hindu devotional practices help to create psychological resilience, emotional regulation and meaning-making. In the literature of psychology, neuroscience, anthropology and sociology, bhakti systems became multidimensional systems that affect the emotional, cognitive, physiological, social and existential functioning of human beings. The results indicate that devotional attendance does not play a role in resilience by acting in a single way, but rather by the interplay of ritual action, philosophic meaning, communal identity, and neurophysiological control.

Managing Emotions by Devotional Practice

The most recurrent conclusion that can be observed in all literature is the significance of devotional practices in emotion regulation. Kirtan, japa, meditation, prayer, and ritual worship practices were also repeatedly linked to lower stress, emotional stability and positive affective stability. Devotional chanting and meditative repetition seem to alleviate psychological arousal through controlling attention, breathing, and emotional focus.

Neuroscientific research on the effects of contemplative practices showed a decrease in cortisol, an increase in alpha and theta brain wave activity and a decline in amygdala activity during devotional practices. These physiological variations are aligned with subjective reports of tranquility, relaxation and emotional reassurance among practitioners.

Attentional stabilization and cognitive quieting, also seem to be facilitated by the repetitions and rhythmic quality of chanting. Devotional repetition can be beneficial in helping people deal with anxiety, doubt, and emotional overload by constricting attentional focus and decreasing intrusive thought patterns.

Also, emotional catharsis became a significant role of devotional expression. Bhajan, kirtan, prayer, and communal worship provide socially approved places of grief, longing, fear, surrender, joy and vulnerability. These practices present an opportunity to release emotions and at the same time inculcate them in sacred and social supportive frameworks.

Devotional Coping and Psychological Resilience

The literature has continuously expressed that the Hindu devotional traditions serve as a significant coping system in times of adversity, uncertainty, and suffering. The results of the Hindu Religious Coping Scale revealed that there is a positive relationship between god-focused coping and spirituality-focused coping and resilience, optimism, emotional stability, and adaptive coping outcomes.

Believers often explain suffering using the concept of karma, Godly will, spiritual cleansing, or submission. These systems of interpretation minimize existential bewilderment as they locate suffering within the context of greater moral and spiritual stories. Instead of viewing adversity as a chaotic experience, people can think of how to make sense of challenging experiences by structuring them through cognition into purpose and meaning frameworks.

The idea of detached action (nishkama karma) became especially important in alleviating anxiety related to the uncontrollable consequences. The focus on ethical interaction, without attachment to outcomes, makes devotees more emotionally balanced and tolerant to uncertainty.

Simultaneously, there are also results that suggested that maladaptive devotional coping can also be achieved in cases when people have a fatalistic perception of suffering or feel that they are abandoned or punished by the divine. There was a correlation between negative religious coping with emotional distress, passivity, guilt, and low coping efficacy.

Connection with the Divine and Emotional Security

The other significant observation is related to the attachment-based character of devotional relationships. In several devotional customs, gods and goddesses were often perceived as emotionally sensitive beings that acted as guardians, friends, nurturers or cherished companions.

Such an attachment-like relationship seems to play a key role in both emotional security and resilience. Devotional attachment is reassuring in times of isolation, grief, fear and uncertainty, as it builds an internalized feeling of divine aids and protection.

It has been indicated by the literature that such an emotional connection can serve as a psychological secure base especially to people without stable social support systems. Devotees are able to develop a long term relationship of relational nature through prayer, surrender, ritual worship and remembrance and this assures them of continuity and emotional reassurance in times of adversity.

These attachment dynamics are further supported by the writings of bhakti saints like Mirabai and Tulsidas, who emphasized devotion as a close emotional bond shared between lovers, one of surrender, love, longing and trust.

Neurophysiological Adaptation and Sanskrit Effect

Multiple studies examined in this paper reported the neurophysiological impacts of mantra repetition, chanting and meditation. Vedic recitation and memorizing of mantras has been linked to structural neuroplasticity, especially in areas of the brain connected to memory, attentional control and cognition.

This effect, which is also referred to as the Sanskrit Effect, indicates that repeated recitation routines reinforce neural networks that deal with concentration and cognitive processes. The mental load of long-

term retention and rhythmic rehearsal can thus act to promote better attentional stability and cognitive stability.

Furthermore, devotional practices were also determined to affect the regulation of the autonomic nervous system by the means of the regulated breathing, rhythmic synchronization, and meditative absorption. This heightened parasympathetic activity and a decrease in physiological stress responses could be among the reasons behind the soothing and emotional stabilizing effects that many practitioners describe.

Group devotional practices are also seen to promote processes of social synchronization that entails reward and bonding networks in the brain. Group singing and rhythmic involvement can create a common emotional experience that enhances social integration and group identity.

Embodied Resilience and Ritual Participation

The anthropological results highlighted the incarnated aspects of resilience among Hindu devotional practices. Physical endurance rituals (fasting, pilgrimage, kavadi carrying and fire-walking) showed that discomfort in the body could be turned into a valuable spiritual experience.

A high cost ritual often was associated with participants reporting feelings of transcendence, emotional purification, empowerment, and spiritual achievement even when there was a lot of physical effort. Physical pain was re-cognitively re-packaged through communal reinforcement, rhythmic immersion, chanting and altered state of consciousness, as the sacrifice, purification, or sacred offering.

These results suggest that the cultural meaning systems have a strong impact on the interpretation and the psychological experience of bodily suffering. Instead of being only endurance, rituals are processes that help to turn adversity into experience of spiritual significance.

Ties to Social and Community Support

The involvement in the community was also found to be a key mechanism of the devotional resilience as indicated by the review. Social support, emotional validation and identity formation are achieved through satsangs, temple meetings, pilgrimages and shared worship.

Worshiping together encourages a sense of belongingness and decreases loneliness by strengthening a collective story, values, and emotional lives. This social aspect is particularly significant with the marginalized groups, such as widows, economically vulnerable groups, and socially isolated groups.

Research done on devotional societies in Vrindavan has shown that communal attendance is usually a kind of social survival. By means of singing together, the process of ritual, and devotional service, people rebuild identity, restore dignity, and establish emotional supportive social networks.

The literature also indicates that the empathy, collective happiness, and emotional synchronization through sensory and emotional unity is achieved by communal chanting and concerted participation in rituals.

Meaning-Making and Existential Adaptation

In philosophical and psychological literature, there was always a consistent emergence of Hindu devotional traditions as systems of existential meaning-making. Ideas like karma, dharma, reincarnation,

surrender and equanimity are some of the concepts that can be used to interpret suffering, uncertainty and mortality and manage these issues psychologically.

A belief in reincarnation, such as one, will locate the current suffering in a larger spiritual path, thus lessening existential hopelessness and dread of death. In a similar manner, equanimity fosters emotional equilibrium in the situations of success and failure, and surrender minimizes anxiety related to overvaluing self-control and ambiguity.

The identity formation and the resilience of existence through sacred narratives and devotional literature are also involved in offering symbolic models of perseverance, sacrifice, devotion, and transcendence.

On the whole, the results indicate that the Hindu devotional traditions are multidimensional resilience systems because they combine emotional regulation, social support, philosophical meaning-making, neurophysiological adaptation, and spiritual attachment into harmonious systems of psychological adaptation.

Discussion

The results of the current review suggest that Hindu bhakti traditions are a multidimensional and complex system of psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and existential meaning-making. Instead of acting as purely religious practices/rituals or theological statements, devotional practices seem to exist in concert on the emotional, cognitive, physiological, social, and spiritual levels. The interdisciplinary evidence considered in this paper indicates that resilience in Hindu devotional cultures is realized at the point of interaction of belief systems, ritual involvement, community identification, neurophysiological control and philosophical meaning.

The combination of emotional devotion with the cognitive and philosophical systems is a significant theme that comes out of the literature. In contrast to the secular models of coping, which mainly focus on behavioral change or restructuring of cognition, bhakti traditions integrate emotional expression, submission, embodiment of rituals, and metaphysical systems of meaning into a holistic approach to adversity. It is possible that this integration is the reason why the devotional practices are still psychologically important in a wide range of social and historical settings.

The neuroscientific evidence presented in the article offers accumulating evidence that devotional practice has physiological and neurological effects, related to stress management and emotional adjustment. Lower levels of cortisol, elevated alpha and theta brain waves activity and lower amygdala activity seen during chanting and meditation are indicators that devotional practice has a role in tangible neurophysiological relaxation.

These results are especially important, as they prove the overlap of the ancient contemplative traditions and modern neuroscience. Physiological effects that can be observed to be associated with relaxation, attentional control and emotional regulation have been found to be the result of practices of Hindu philosophical books that have been described as the means to equanimity and emotional balance.

The Sanskrit Effect adds further to indicate that long-term mantra memorization and Vedic recitation can potentially lead to structural neuroplasticity. Greater activity in memory- and attention-related areas suggests that devotional repetition has the potential to reinforce mental and cognitive mechanisms related

to focus, mental discipline, and stamina. Significantly, the neurophysiological outcomes of bhakti vary significantly in critical aspects in comparison to strictly secular models of meditation since the practices of devotion involve emotional attachment, music, symbolism of rituals, and the synchronization of the community. As a result, bhakti can be able to trigger attentional networks, emotional processing networks, social bonding networks, and reward systems at the same time. This multidimensional activation is what separates the devotional engagement and the lone contemplative practices, which are more about the detached awareness in the first place.

The other significant discovery is the emotionally expressive character of bhakti traditions. Rituals like kirtan, bhajan singing, prayer and narration provide culturally approved venues of emotional expression and person-to-person communion. In such settings, feelings of grief, longing, surrendering, hoping, joy, and vulnerability are not repressed but are converted into divine experience.

Such emotional catharsis seems to be a significant factor in alleviating psychological tension and leading to resilience. The group and rhythmic form of devotional singing might contribute to controlling the level of emotions and at the same time, strengthening the social identity and spiritual certainty.

Devotional literature and poetry are particularly emotional aspects of bhakti. Mirabai and Tulsidas are the saints who changed personal pain and suffering, desire and social distress into accounts of divine love and submission. These stories still supply symbolic templates by which modern devotees decipher emotional anguish and existential torment.

The results are thus indicative that emotional resilience in bhakti traditions is not attained by emotional avoidance but by emotional transformation and reinterpretation of the sacred.

The idea of karma was developed in the literature as one of the primary processes of cognitive reframing and existential making of meaning. The conceptualization of suffering based on the moral causality of life, karma, offers a platform on which people can make sense of adversity instead of seeing it as an accidental or disorderly occurrence.

This interpretive structure could psychologically decrease existential uncertainty and enhance perceived coherence in times of distress. Instead of perceiving suffering as a meaningless misfortune, devotees tend to think of adversity as a larger spiritual and moral process.

But even the discussion shows significant tensions in the interpretation of karma. Though adaptive conceptualizations of karma maintain agency and promote ethical behavior, maladaptive conceptualizations can give rise to passivity, powerlessness, or fatalism. It is the difference between acceptance and resignation that thus becomes critical in assessing the psychological impact of devotional coping.

The Bhagavad Gita doctrine of unattached action (nishkama karma) seems to play a crucial role in the combination of surrender and agency. Detached action can alleviate the performance anxiety and maintain motivation and ethical accountability because it promotes disciplined action without over-commitment to the consequences.

It is this surrender/agency balance that comes out as one of the most important psychologically significant aspects of Hindu devotional resilience.

Attachment-based explanations of devotional experience are also significantly supported by the findings. In various traditions, the goddess was often portrayed as an emotionally gullible and protective figure who acted as a nurturer, friend, lover, or shepherd.

Divine attachment is seen as a source of emotional support and existential safety, especially in times of social alienation, loss, confusion, or weakness. This sort of attachment-based relationship can fill in the wobbly interpersonal support systems by generating a permanent internalized source of comfort and protection.

Psychologically, the deity acts as a symbolical safe ground that enables people to endure misfortune without losing hope and stability of emotions. This attachment-oriented conceptualizing of devotion assists in understanding why devotional practices can continue to be psychologically significant even in the state of social deprivation and marginalization.

The dimensions of attachment of bhakti are also present in the relational and emotionally immersive quality of the devotional involvement. In contrast to the abstract spirituality, the bhakti traditions promote emotionally close contact with the divine, via prayer, remembrance, ritual worship, and surrender.

Another significant source of strength in the literature was the communal aspects of the devotional participation. The emotionally supportive environments that are formed by satsangs, pilgrimages, temple rituals, and communal chanting promote a sense of belongingness, collective identity, and shared meaning-making.

These social functions are particularly important in those situations where there is loneliness, migration, stress in the city, and social fragmentation. Engaging in community rituals minimizes isolation by enhancing inter-relationship and shared emotionality.

The widows in Vrindavan are of special interest in the context of depicting the social aspects of devotional strength. Devotional communities offer emotional support, daily routines, social identity and existential meaning to many marginalized women. With communal singing, worship and participation in the rituals, people rebuild identity and belonging even after being excluded or abandoned.

Anthropological research also indicates that collective rituals create emotional synchrony by rhythmic involvement, music, movement, and common sensory immersion. The experiences can enhance social cohesion and collectively regulating emotions via neurobiological bonding processes.

Therefore, resilience among bhakti traditions cannot be perceived only on a personal level; it is also created through collective engagement and social connectivity.

The review further shows the significance of embodiment in devotional resilience. Fasting, pilgrimage, kavadi bearing, and fire-walking rituals show how we can learn to turn the uncomfortable experience of the body into the spiritually rewarding one. Those who engage in such rituals often attest to feelings of transcendence, cleansing, empowerment, and emotional rejuvenation despite extreme physical exertions. The anthropological evidence proposes that the meaning systems of rituals are essentially used to interpret the experience of pain by redefining the discomfort as sacrifice, devotion, or sacrifices.

This metamorphosis of physical pain into worthwhile spiritual experience shows the strong interplay of cognition, culture, emotion, and physiology. Instead of being functions of survival, the rituals become processes by which the adversity is psychologically redefined and integrated into the spiritual realm. The

embodied aspects of devotion are thus essential in the sphere of resilience in linking the physical experience to the sacred sense and collective identity.

Relevance and Mental Health Implications Today

The conclusions of this review play significant roles in the current studies of mental health and culturally aware therapeutic work. Devotional practices can be used as a source of easy and culturally familiar emotional regulation and coping in situations like India where spirituality is still part of daily life.

Equanimity, detached action, surrender, gratitude and communal participation, are concepts that might provide psychologically valuable paradigms that are more closely connected to Hindu communities than Western therapeutic models alone.

Meanwhile, clinical caution is also highlighted in the review. Such practices of devotion are not always adaptive and dangers of spiritual bypassing, fatalism, emotional repression, and negative religious coping are to be noted critically. It seems that healthy devotional practice is about being able to balance surrender and agency, spirituality and emotional awareness, acceptance and practical action.

All in all, the discussion indicates that Hindu devotional traditions are complex systems of psychological adaptation that combine expression of emotions, regulation of neurophysiological processes, social belonging, philosophical meaning-making, and spiritual attachment to coherent resilience systems that can serve individuals on various levels of human experience.

Mental Health Practice Implications

The findings from the ongoing review suggest that the devotional practice of Hindu rituals can be culturally appropriate and can be used as a tool for psychological resilience, emotional control and coping. Chanting, meditation, prayer and communal worship are some practices that help in reducing stress, social support and meaning-making. The idea of karmic causes and consequences, dharma, surrender and equanimity can also create culturally competent models of emotional regulation and anxiety.

Feelings of loneliness and increased sense of collectivity can be reduced by informal psychosocial support, such as devotional groups (e.g., satsangs) and communal rituals. Nonetheless, clinicians are advised to make a critical differentiation of adaptive spiritual coping and maladaptive patterns of coping, including fatalism, emotional suppression, and spiritual bypassing. Overall, implementing culturally familiar concepts of spirituality in mental health care can improve the therapeutic relevance and engagement with Hindu populations.

Limitations

There are a few limitations of the current review. First of all, it is based on secondary literature and not on primary empirical studies, thereby limiting generalizability. Second, the interdisciplinary nature of the study adds to the conceptual complexity as there are multiple views on what is meant by spirituality, resilience, and well-being. Third, Hindu devotional cultures are quite varied in terms of regional, sectarian, and sociocultural settings and thus hard to generalize.

Secondly, there is a lack of neuroscientific and psychological evidence on bhakti practices, especially in Indian populations. Other studies used wider meditation and reflection techniques, which might not capture the element of devotional spirituality. Finally, fatalism, spiritual bypassing, and emotional suppressions serve as reminders that devotional coping is not so psychologically adaptive as it may seem.

Conclusion

The present review indicates that the Hindu Bhakti Traditions can be understood as multi-dimensional system of psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and meaning making. Emotional stability, coping, social support and spirituality are promoted by these devotional practices: chanting, meditation, prayer, ritual worship and satsang.

The review suggests that the concepts of karma, dharma, surrender and equanimity can explain suffering and help people cope with emotional distress, and techniques such as mantra repetition and kirtan can affect stress-regulation and cognitive functioning. Emotional security, belongingness and social resilience are also reinforced by devotional attachment and communal participation.

The study acknowledges, however, that maladaptive devotional coping can also be a source of psychological suffering in certain circumstances, such as fatalism, emotional suppression and spiritual bypassing. In summary, devotional practices of Hindus are cultural based frameworks that are interwoven with philosophy, ritual, social inclusion, and spirituality, all important elements that contribute to resilience and well-being. Interdisciplinary studies in the future will further elucidate the connection between devotional practices and mental health and emotional adaptation.

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