

Enduring Death and Bereavement: An Analysis of Sinhala Buddhist Funerary Practices and Worden's 'Four Tasks of Mourning'

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Cultures around the world practice different funerary rites to cope with death and bereavement. Similarly, Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices have their inherent way of managing the negative emotions and feelings of people who suffer at their loved ones' death. It is an aid to the immediate family members of the deceased to move on with life. Western psychologists also have developed treatment models to manage negative consequences concerning human behaviour in utmost needy situations. This study comparatively analyzed Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices and the psychologist J. W. Worden's model of 'four tasks of mourning' to endure death and bereavement. His model is flexible for healthy grieving as well as adjusting to life without any enforcement. Participatory observation was used to collect primary data on Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices while psychological treatments were used as secondary data. The study analyzed the two modes under accepting death, working through the pain, adjusting life, and moving on with life. Worden's model is scientific and a gradual process while Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices incorporate the same but as a ritualistic process. Sinhala funerary practices are mostly influenced by the Buddhist philosophical concepts '*kamma*' and impermanence. For example, funeral banners carry the Buddhist principle 'All compounded things are impermanent' (*anicca vata sankhara*). The social support system also helps the enduement process of the family. These support systems aid in adjusting to the new reality of living in the absence of loved ones. Worden's framework of four tasks manipulates the inner spiritual peace and the support of society. Hence, features of Worden's flexible model can be identified in the Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices of Sri Lanka. Methodical processes aid a person to cope with death and bereavement through psychological support while Sinhala-Buddhist funerary practices provide the same aid as a cultural practice.

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