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

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Abstract

Cultures across the world practice diverse funerary rites to cope with death and bereavement with respect to how the 'death' is contemplated in their socio-religious context. In Sri Lanka, 'death' is viewed by the Sinhala-Buddhist community along with the principle of impermanence in Buddhist *dhamma* and hence their funerary practices have a socio-cultural support system to manage their negative feelings and emotions of the immediate family members of the deceased and to move on with life. In the studies of psychology, the negative consequences concerning human behavior in utmost needy situations are addressed through different models and theories as a guiding method and one of such concerning death and bereavement has been discussed in the 'four tasks of mourning' model introduced by J. William Worden. Therefore, this study comparatively analyzes the potential of Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices and the model of 'four tasks of mourning' to endure death and bereavement by analyzing four modes; accepting death, working through the pain, adjusting to life, and moving on with life. Participatory observation has been used to collect primary data for Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices while literature on psychological treatments has been used to collect secondary data. The study focuses on Worden's model as a scientific and gradual process while Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices are a ritualistic process that is mostly influenced by the Buddhist philosophical concepts. The social support system also helps the enduring process of the immediate family and adjusting to the new reality of living in the absence of loved ones as in the Worden's model. Hence, the features of Worden's flexible model can be identified in the inherent Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices of Sri Lanka. When a methodical process aids to cope with the death and bereavement of the person who seeks psychological support, Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices provide the same as a cultural practice.

Keywords: *Death, bereavement, Four tasks of mourning, Funerary practices, Sinhala Buddhists*

Introduction

Empirical evidence indicates that the death and bereavement of a loved one usually brings about both short-term and long-term negative impacts on the physical and mental well-being as well as the social well-being of other members of the family or society. Courtney (2020) states these negative impacts under two main aspects as mental impacts and physical impacts. Mental impacts include shock and disbelief, feeling numb, sadness, despair, loneliness, feeling empty, regret, shame, anger, feeling resentful, anxiety, helplessness, insecurity, and fear whereas physical impacts include fatigue, nausea, sickness, weight loss, or weight gain, aches and pains, night sweats, heart palpitations, feeling faint or lightheaded, insomnia. Deveney (2021) explains that grief and mourning are common terms to describe feelings and behaviors following a loss. Grief is a common and normal psychological response following a death or loss and some consequences such as sadness, longing to be with the person who was lost, thoughts and memories of the person, anxiety, and also anger. While grief refers to the internal experiences of loss, mourning is best defined as acts or outward expressions of grief. Grief and mourning which occur with death and bereavement bring a considerable negative impact on the relatives. As Moor and Graaf (2016) explain, these negative impacts are different according to some facts such as kinships, gender, time period, and closeness but, death and bereavement lead to negative consequences because the death of someone means loss of social and economic support for a family or a society.

Funeral rituals help people to minimize the aforementioned negative impacts by understanding the concept of death, and gradually getting adjusted to their mundane lives without the dead person. The purpose of the funerary rituals describes as follows;

“Mortuary rituals involve how the remains of the dead are handled in different cultures. These rituals help the members acknowledge their loss, maintain a link with the dead, and help the bereaved continue with their normal life.” (UKEssays: November 2018)

The importance of funerary practices can be recognized by paying attention to the deaths during the Corona pandemic. According to Rodrigues (2020), Many people have felt that they are unable to mourn for their significant others properly because many funerals have been prohibited or postponed due to the spreading of the virus. Even though this prohibition is for the safety of people, it can have a significant impact on the well-being of the distressed. By studying on the *Javanes* death rites, Geertz

(1973) also explains the importance of the culture patterns for social and psychological processes which shape public behavior. He explains how the members of the family of a dead person are preparing themselves for the worst and how the whole neighborhood gathered and supported them to adjust by minimizing negative psychosocial impacts as follows;

"She seemed to lose her bearings entirely and began to move about the yard shaking hands with everyone, all strangers to her, and saying, "Forgive me my faults, forgive me my faults." Again she was forcibly restrained; people said, "Calm yourself; think of your other children, do you want to follow your son to the grave?." (p.159)

Above statement shows that society plays an important role towards family members of the deceased person. As Greertz elaborates, ritual is not just a pattern of meaning, it is also a form of social interaction, and it provides a meaningful framework for facing death. Greertz further states that rapid social change has disrupted *Javanese* society and this is reflected in a disintegrated culture the rituals themselves become matters of political conflict. Therefore, *Javanese* find it increasingly difficult to determine the proper attitude toward a particular event. By referring to a functionalist perspective, Abramovitch (1973) explains how death rituals provide a unique opportunity for studying the core values of any culture while counteracting the centrifugal forces of fear, dismay, and demoralization associated with death.

Therefore, funeral rites have a specific health value as well as a cultural value in societies. These symbolic activities help human beings to get together and share their thoughts, and feelings about important life events. According to Wolfelt (2016), individuals, families, and ultimately society as a whole will suffer if we do not reinvest ourselves in the funeral rituals. When considering the importance of funerary practices, Herath (1996) states two types of objectives as follows;

- (i) Not only should death be made known to society as a universal event, but everyone should be aware of death.
- (ii) That after every death society must be restructured for future survival.

As per above mentioned discussion, the funerary practices are an important aspect of civilizations. 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 one's death. The Sinhala Buddhist funerary

practices have a strong Buddhist philosophical background and Herath (1996) states as follows,

“The ritual of death found among Sinhala Buddhists is very clear in line with the existing belief system about this world and the hereafter and the existing cycle of ideas about the universe” (p. 117)

Accordingly, it is evident that the Buddhist teaching of human rebirth and cycle of countless lives (*samsara*) has an impact on exercising funeral practices. Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices can be studied with its process from the moment of death to the process after the funeral as follows,

- (i) Moment of death
- (ii) Funeral home
- (iii) Last day
- (iv) Post-funeral activities

All the above events have a strong Buddhist religious background. According to De Silva (2002), Family members arrange some religious activities such as chanting *pirith*, reading the good merits book (*pin potha*), chanting stanzas, and worshipping Lord Buddha in front of the bed to bless the person who is in the moment of death. Sinhala Buddhist funerary home is also very specific due to its collaborative environment. According to Herath (1996), the ritual of death is caused by an individual event but represents a collective process.

The Sinhalese' funeral arrangements are also different from other cultures. On the last day of the funeral, whole villagers get together to pay last respect to the dead person and Buddhist monks conduct the religious observances. The relatives and friends also make speeches by remembering the deceased's good qualities and contribution to the society. Depending on the last wishes and circumstances, burial or cremation is the decomposition mode of Sinhala Buddhist culture. As De Silva (2002) explains, on the sixth day a Buddhist monk is invited to deliver a sermon (*hath dawasa bana*), and the next day few Buddhist monks are invited for almsgiving (*hath dawasa dāne*). Further, he explains that alms are also offered after three months, one year, and annually. The purpose of all these processes is to transfer good merits to the loved one who passed away and to make his afterlife better and prosperous.

The Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices have their inherent features to cope with death and bereavement and they eventually lead to

minimize negative psychological impacts and help the family members to adjust to a new life without the dead person. This will be analyzed broadly in the discussion part.

The negative psychological impacts of death and bereavement are common in every person in any culture. According to Gire (2014), regardless of how or where we are born, what unites people of all cultures is the fact that everyone eventually dies. Therefore, the negative impacts which occur with relatives due to the loss of a loved one are also common in every cultural context. Different cultures have different meanings for 'death' and bereavement as well as different types of coping strategies depending on their cultural beliefs. Kuehn (2013) describes that there is a useful connection between the positive coping strategies that exist in multiple cultures and the grief therapy models used in western culture.

Therefore, in modern societies, people tend to obtain psychological support as a coping strategy. According to Stillion (2015), grief-related psychological knowledge has rooted in the Freudian works and Freud emphasizes grief as necessary after the death of a loved one. He believes that a grieving person's emotional energy can be reinvested in new relationships and activities. He has termed these mourning activities as "grief work." Freudian works helped many scholars to create their theories and models. For example, John Bowlby's attachment theory, Elisabeth Kubler's five stages of dying, Therese Rando's six "R" model, Simon Rubin's two task model, Stroebe and colleagues' dual-process model, and William Worden's 'four tasks of mourning'. People in modern societies are led to get these model-based psychological treatments to manage negative consequences in their utmost needy situations.

Catherine & Dykeman (2017) explain three metatheories in grief work such as stage-based models, task-based models, and idiographic models. Among them, psychologist J.W. Worden's model of 'four tasks of mourning' is one of the effective treatment models to endure death and bereavement which is included in task-based models. Stillion (2015) has stated it as follows;

"Worden's task model has been widely used around the world as a standard reference on grief counseling and grief therapy and has been translated into 14 languages."

This model is flexible for healthy grieving as well as adjusting to life without any enforcement. Worden (2008) describes this model as follows;

Task 1: To accept the reality of loss.

The Survivors need to believe in the impossibility of reunion, at least in this life, and beginning the journey of healing.

Task 2: To process the pain of grief.

The survivor needs to analyze the pain of loss to fulfill the pain process and inhibit suppressing or ignoring the pain.

Task 3: To Adjust to a world without the deceased.

The survivors need to be concerned about three types of adjustments such as internal adjustment, external adjustment, and spiritual adjustment.

Task 4: To find an enduring connection with the deceased in embarking on a new life.

Providing the survivors with a place to lead a fruitful life in the world. The above-mentioned model is considered an effective model in the western psychotherapeutic field to treat people who are in need in their most difficult time due to the loss of their loved ones. Basically, this is a cognitive process that restructures the thoughts of the deceased, the experience of loss, and the altered world in which the survivor must now live on.

This study consists of a comparative analysis of Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices and J.W. Worden's model of 'four tasks of mourning' to endure death and bereavement. Hence, the main objective of the current study was to examine how the features of Warden's model of four tasks of mourning are included in the Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices. Another objective of the study was to examine how the Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices work for forming social interaction and social harmony in the community while helping individuals to reduce negative consequences of a death. The existing studies have separately studied both Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices and Worden's four tasks of mourning. Hence, the specialty of the current study was comparatively studying both east-west practices in the same study.

Methodology

Participatory observation has been used to collect primary data for Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices. The primary data has been collected from two funerals i.e. (i) a suicidal death of a young girl (17 years old) in Mihinthale, Sri Lanka in on 28 August, 2021, and (ii) a death of an old man

(75 years old) who lived in Kandy, Sri Lanka on 18 December 2021. The secondary data has been collected from books, research articles, journal articles to analyze Worden's task based psychological treatments. A limitation of the current study occurred with the difficulty to collect data from various geographical areas due to the restriction of Covid pandemic during the selected period of this study.

Discussion

This paper analyzes two modes of overcoming grief and bereavement caused due to the loss of closed ones including (i) accepting death and working through the pain, and (ii) adjusting to life and moving on with life. It has been comparatively analyzed with Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices and the Worden's model based psychological process that helps people to endure negative psycho-social consequences of a death.

Accepting death and working through the pain

The death of a loved one is unbearable for anyone in any society since humans are not capable of immediately forgetting the memory of the person when he or she was alive. Therefore, accepting the death of the loved one is hard for the survivors and primarily affects them negatively. Making the survivors aware of the fact that the dead person can never return to the family or the society is the very first task among Worden's model of four tasks of mourning. This task was named "accepting the reality of loss" and in this, the therapist makes an effort to assist the survivors by making them believe in the impossibility of reunion, at least in this life. As Gernon (n.d) explains, this task is more complicated due to some facts such as if people cannot accept the death in a relationship and confront the full impact of the loss, and if they are unable to accept the reality of how the person died. He further explains that to some people 'acceptance' implies agreement or approval or to others, the severing of ties with the past. However, the meaning of acceptance is none of them and it is simply the moment that people are ready to begin the journey of healing. The therapist uses necessary therapeutic skills as well as therapeutic tasks such as letting the clients talk about the dead person in past tense and actively listening, making them write, and providing them with adequate social support. This therapeutic intervention leads them to heal gradually and become aware of the reality while healing.

While western psychotherapy focuses on scientific methods to persuade people to accept their loss, Sinhala Buddhist culture has its inherent process to educate people about the ultimate reality of everything in the world. Mainly, the majority of Sinhalese in Sri Lankan society follow Buddhism, and the philosophy of Buddhism influences every aspect of the lives of Sinhala Buddhists. Death is understood as an inevitable phenomenon of life by the Sinhalese Buddhists from their childhood since they are educated by the religious corporation. One of the examples of these Buddhist concepts is, that "life indeed is uncertain, death is certain."¹² Therefore, the followers generally understand that there is no way to immortalize an individual who has been born into this world. According to Gunarathne (2005), Buddhism explains that the nature of anything in the world has three stages: birth, existence, and loss or death. He further explains this idea deeply as, "all physical and mental things are inevitably changing. It can be very fast. It also can happen slowly. But it will inevitably happen" (Gunarathne: 2005, p. 25).

One of the main concepts of Buddhism is 'impermanence', meaning that there is nothing permanent in the world, and everything is subjected to change and decay. As this is a part of Buddhist concepts, it often connects to the events of life; birth and death, and in between constant change. This eventually leads to the acceptance of losses in life after the death of a loved one, though the death has been caused unexpectedly or naturally. In order to cope with that, there are specific rituals in the Sinhalese Buddhist society that have been influenced by the Buddhist concepts to both a dying person and the survivors to accept the reality. One of them is leading the dying person to listen to the good works that he or she has done in life. This activity is named "reading the good merits book at the death moment." This is done because of the Buddhist belief in their next birth. De Silva (2002) explained this as follows:

"It is believed that if the dying person makes a *prārthanā* (wish) aspiring to be reborn in a particular state (as a human or in the realm of god) his wish will become effective. A person who has led a meritorious life, according to the Buddhist way of life may summon his powers of concentration to remember a good deed and wish for a pleasant rebirth (...)" (p.146)

According to the above statement, it is proved that the Sinhalese culture considers death as not the end, but a transition to another birth. As

¹² Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw, "Gatha"(verse) on mindfulness/contemplation of death

Wood and Mastrangelo (2020) explains, research suggests that death accepting cultures are less anxious compared to the cultures that are not willing to accept death.

Apart from the above-mentioned ritual, a Buddhist monk is invited to the household for chanting *pirith* (stanzas chanted to bless) in front of the dying person. Engaging in religious activities at the last few hours of the life of a person is also helping both the dying person and survivors to reduce the negative mental outcomes. According to the observation at the funeral of the old man (as described in the methodology), family members revealed that they console because they have done their level best to make the dying father's last moment comfortable both mentally and physically. Further, the members of the family accept the loss by arranging religious rituals when their loved one prepares for the next birth. The effect of these types of rituals are as follows:

"At the moment of death, Buddhist monks chant and preside a sermon to counsel, console, and provide a conceptual mental framework for the grieving relatives regarding the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth."
(Silva: 2002, p.146)

The above statement indicates that the religious activities at the death moment are also important to the mental well-being of the relatives. According to the observations of this study, all the family members are getting together around the bed and they are sharing their bereavement feelings, and that has helped them to accept the loss and manage the negative outcomes that follows. It has also been proved that relatives often get together and treat the dying person in the buddhist culture and this collective behavior is leading people to cope with loss and accept the loss.

According to the observations of the two funerals, (i.e 17 years old girl in Mihintale and the 75 years old man in Kandy in the study) it was evident that traditional funeral arrangements also contribute to accepting the loss or making the family members aware of the reality. One such arrangement was the display of banners around the funeral home which relates to the Buddhist impermanence concept. They remind people that death cannot be prevented and people must accept it. The banners display at the entrance to the funeral home contains the following phrases or stanzas to name a few;

All compounded things are impermanent (Pāli: "අනිච්චා ච ත සංඛාරා")
Everything must be left (Pāli: "සබ්බන් පහාය ගමනියන්")

As it conveys, the change and impermanence of life is emphasized to the living others.

The funeral environment and the people's behavior show some symbolic features in Sinhalese society. As Palliyaguru (2007) explains, the colour white represents the unfortunate and sorrowful expression in Sinhalese society. In this study, it was observed that people of the village decorated the environment with white colour flags and streamers. People dress in white and women avoid wearing jewelers. According to Wijesekare (1983), mirrors, pictures, and calendars hanging on the walls of the funeral home are turned to face the wall. According to the participatory observation, the funeral process included traditional music using an instrument pipe and two drums. This sound of music is called *mala bera* (a sorrowful beat made with drums and pipes). These symbolic rituals are signs of Sinhalese culture that remind people of the impermanence of life and also lead them to accept the loss.

The Sinhalese-Buddhist society can be recognized as a community with collaborative behavior. They support each other to perform rituals in their life events from birth to death. Similarly, in funerals, the neighbors come to the funeral home and talk about the deceased and the circumstances of the death with family members and therefore, it helps family members to accept the loss which is essential to reduce their pain. In particular, the majority of the villagers attend the funeral and engage in work at the premises as an extra helping hand. According to De Silva (2002) meals are not prepared in the funeral home and neighbors bring the food for both family members and visitors. This meal is called *mala batha*. In Sinhalese culture, funerals are held at home and the body is kept for over two days to let people pay their last homage to the dead person. All the relatives and villagers take responsibility during these days and members of the family of the dead person are provided with care and special attention. This social support system has an impact on helping the family members to accept the reality and cope with the negative mentality caused immediately after the loss.

The second task of Worden's four tasks of mourning is working through the pain and it is named "process the pain of grief." According to Williams (2013), people have to acknowledge negative emotions such as sadness, fear, loneliness, despair, hopelessness, and anger to guilt, blame, and shame, though they accept the loss. The therapist's contribution is to make them focus on their normal life while helping them acknowledge the

pain caused by death, by talking about, and understanding these complex emotions to work through them.

Similarly, Sinhalese Buddhist funerary practices have their inherent way to encourage survivors to reinstate their normal condition while they suffer and worry about the immediate loss. As William (2013) explains, to acknowledge negative emotions, both the therapist and the client should talk about them. It has been observed that the Sinhalese funeral home has a support system in which survivors can express their emotions to their neighbors and visitors in informal discussions. It has also been observed that the neighbors and visitors are crying and weeping with family members of the deceased and share their feelings and emotions with them with empathy. This process can be observed as follows:

"The effectiveness of the cultural traditions of various rituals and ceremonies encourage the building of a supportive group of relatives and friends. These emotional bonds are displayed on this occasion." (Silva: 2002, p.146)

According to the above statement, people get shocked and weep just after realizing that their loved one has gone from their family forever but, the cultural pattern influences them to control themselves and work through the pain. The Sinhalese culture has a social support system that helps people to survive even in their worst situations.

The observations in the study have identified that the neighbors of the family express their empathetic feeling with their inherent ways of funerary practices. At the funeral of the old man in Kandy, neighbors expressed their feelings to young children as follows,

"That is his *karma* (*Kamma*). What to do now? You should think about your mother. When *māraya* (death) calls, no one can avoid it. This is the nature of everyone." (An attendee, man, at the funeral on 28 August 2021)

The above type of expression could also be observed at the funeral of the young girl in Mihintale, who committed suicide, and it was as follows,

"That is the life-span she possesses. We should collect merits for her to make her next birth a pleasant one. Now that is what we can do. You have other children and members to look after them now." (An attendee, a woman, at the funeral on 18 December 2021)

According to the above expressions, it can be recognized that folks have a deep understanding of the concept of impermanence which they have culturally absorbed from Buddhism, and they possess an inherent knowledge on how to make the family members strong to bear their losses.

Survivors can also reduce their pain and obtain some comfort with these empathetic approaches as well as focus on the future of others in the family of the deceased.

Another observation was that relatives treated the visitors who were coming to pay their last respects to the dead person by greeting and offering food and drinks. Sinhalese culture is reputed with their good hospitality that can be observed in every event in their life events. The family members also did not forget to talk to the visitors and treat them. They were supporting relatives to do the arrangements at the funeral though they were in a mentally difficult situation. It seems that, though survivors suffer from negative emotions, they have opportunities to express them as well as work through the pain according to funeral cultural patterns. Williams (2013) states that there are some basic ways that one can accept the reality of a loss, and work through the pain, such as going through the rituals of a funeral or memorial. Hence, it is evident that the Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices have an inherent process to fulfill the first two tasks of Worden's model, i.e. accepting death and working through the pain, and there are both similar and different features that can be identified.

Adjusting life, and moving on with life

After the death of a loved one, family members should adjust to the normal lifestyle and move on with life. By referring to Worden, Williams (2013) explains that the survivors are impacted by the loss, depending on the person who has died, as well as the roles that he or she has played in their lives. Survivors need to learn new skills and tasks to fulfill those roles such as bill paying, parenting, and taking care of the home. The challenges such as living alone, doing things alone, and redefining the self without the other person makes the lives difficult to the survivors. Therefore, the therapist helps survivors to focus on the usual lifestyle that they had previously as well as to move forward with new hopes. This process also included adjusting to a new spiritual environment, which may have been influenced by the experience of death. Therefore, Worden explains this process as all internal, external, and spiritual adjustment.

Worden's tasks of adjusting to life and moving on with life can be seen in the Sinhalese Buddhist cultural ritualistic process with both similar and different aspects. Especially, the family members of the dead person are educated by both religious corporations and social systems to adjust to life with new skills to fulfill tasks that had been formerly undertaken by the

dead person. In the Sinhalese society, people play different roles as parents, children, supportive neighbors, benefactors in the temple, and social workers. As Herath (1996) explains, the death of a person in old Sinhalese society is an unbearable decrement since Sinhalese society has a corporate culture. Therefore, society often expects family members to play the roles which have been played by the dead person. The process that funerary rituals educate family members to adjust to life can be identified with last-day funeral activities. In Sinhalese Buddhist funerary practices, Buddhist monks are invited to perform religious rituals on the last day before burial or cremation. This process is known as *pansakūlaya*. According to the observations of this study, and Wijesekare's (1983) explanation, Buddhist monks are offered a white cloth which is known as *mathakawasthra*. After that, the closest relatives slowly pour water from a pitcher into a cup while Buddhist monks are chanting stanzas to convey the merits to the deceased as follows,

“යථා වාරි වහා පුරා - පරිපුරෙන්නි සාගරන් -
ඒව මේව ඉකෝ දින්නම් - ජේථානම් උපකප්පති

The meaning of the above-mentioned stanza is as the full water-bearing from rivers to fill the ocean, so indeed does what is given here benefit the dead. This can also be identified as a moment in which the family members are satisfied with what they did for the loved one on the last day at home. It also helps them to adjust their spiritual life by knowing that they can do good deeds for the person though the person is no longer with them.

The observations of the study further proved that speeches are conducted to tribute to the deceased by both Buddhist monks and laymen in the village, after all the religious activities. They express their sentiments on all good deeds done by the deceased and request family members to continue those good conduct of life by fulfilling duties on behalf of the dead person. This moment of the funerary practices' inherent process educates survivors to adjust to life and continue the roles played by the deceased. The laymen who make speeches promise on behalf of the relatives and neighbors to look after survivors and provide necessary social security. The old Sinhalese culture had a great social security system since the people are inter-connected in the community. Therefore, it was evident that these funerary practices lead survivors to adjust to life from internal, external, and spiritual aspects.

By referring to Worden, Williams (2013) explains that moving on with life means finding an appropriate, ongoing connection in survivors' emotional lives with the person who died while allowing them to move

forward. It also allows for thoughts and memories while starting new meaningful things, or new relationships. Similarly, some post-funeral rituals allow survivors to maintain a connection with the deceased while focusing on new things. The Sinhalese culture has a process as its people can maintain their relationship with dead relatives and it begins from the sixth day of the death. De Silva (2002) states the process as follows,

"On the sixth night after the occurrence of death, a monk is invited to deliver a sermon. The sermon usually will be on the subject of coping with the loss of a loved one (...) traditional *dāne* or alms are offered to monks on the seventh day, three months, and one year after the death of a family member. From then onwards, an annual *dāne* is offered to the monks on the death anniversary.

The above process is the one in which Sinhalese Buddhists can engage with dead members of the family though they died many years ago. The Buddhist belief is that people who offer alms and do good deeds can convey the merits to their loved ones who are not in a position to do so, and hence the soul will be satisfied as well as focus on new lives with a gear of spiritual pleasure. In traditional almsgivings, Buddhist stories are preached by the Buddhist monks to make laymen cogitate the impermanent. De Silva (2002) explains the Buddhist story of *kisāgōtamī* as an example. In the Lord Buddha's era, a woman known as *Kisāgōtamī* has come to meet him to find medicine to cure her dead child, thinking that she can heal them to live again. The Lord Buddha had asked *kisāgōtamī* to bring mustard seeds from a family in which no death occurred, to make her realize that it is very common to everyone and unavoidable. As the story ends, *Kisāgōtamī* has realized the definite factors of life; if there is birth, death follows. According to Buddhism, everything in the world is subjected to change since impermanence is the reality and the universal truth. Therefore, these preachings make people aware of the reality and accept the loss as well as adjust to life and move on with it. The Sinhalese Buddhist funeral practices have a systematic way from the beginning to the end of a funeral that can help people to reduce pain and adjust to life step by step.

Conclusion

As per the discussion, it was proved that the Sinhalese Buddhist funeral practices had many similar features to Worden's four tasks of mourning which could help people who suffered the loss of their loved ones. It was also proved that there are some different features of the ritualistic process when compared to the psychological process as it is practiced in the private sphere whereas ritualistic processes are embedded

in social and cultural spheres. Additionally, when theories and concepts on grief work based on scientific processes have been developed in the Western world, Sinhala Buddhist culture practices an inherent process that helps people to overcome grief and mourning as well as overcome negative psychological issues on a Buddhist philosophical basis. Sinhala Buddhist funerary practices have rooted from Buddhist philosophy and most of the features have meanings, but they also have strong social cultural values as well. In the Sinhala Buddhist culture, funerals were a reason to renew social relationships and remind people of the society's role towards individuals when they are in difficult situations.

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