

## Buddha Pūjā -- path of transformation

The initial vision, "right understanding", is the first step of the Noble Eightfold Path. This can be instantaneous. The next seven steps usually take longer, as **understanding** grows into a way of **being**.

### śraddhā (devotion)

"Understanding must pass through the emotions before it can influence the way we lead our lives... before it can manifest as perfect speech, perfect action and all the other successive steps... **śraddhā** represents our full emotional response to higher reality..."

Some Western Buddhists have even been under the strange impression that there is no ritual in Buddhism. The traditional Eastern Buddhist approach starts with devotion. Buddhists who are unable even to observe the precepts, let alone meditate or reflect on the dharma, are at least able to attend a puja and offer flowers to the Buddha."

Sangharakshita, *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism*, Windhorse Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2000.

### kriya (action)

The Buddhist word for ritual is **Kriya**, meaning shared action based upon shared belief and striving. **Kriya** requires:

- ~ sustained spiritual exertion (sādhana)
- ~ intensity, with attention to detail
- ~ beauty (surroundings, mantras chanted)

Even when performed alone, the Buddhist's kriya is joined

with the kriya of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of all times and places.

The booklet "*Sampoojanam: Reverence to the Buddha*" gives specific directions on topics such as how to arrange the altar, in what order to make offerings and when to ring the gong or bell.

## The Sevenfold Buddha Pūjā

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a guide for entering the way of life of a Bodhisattva. It was composed in 8<sup>th</sup> Century India by the poet Śāntideva.

**Anuttara pūjā** ("supreme worship") is the first step in living as a Bodhisattva.

The elements of **Sevenfold Buddha Pūjā** are:

vandana (वन्दन)	obeisance, homage
pūjā (पूजा)	worship, offering
saraṇa-gamana (सरणगमन)	taking refuge
pāpa-deśanā (पापदेशना)	sin confession
puṇyānumodanā (पुण्यानुमोदना)	rejoicing in merit
adhyeṣanā (अध्येषना)	prayer
yācanā (याचना)	supplication

pariṇāmanā (परिणामना)      transference of merit

atmabhāvādi-parityāgaḥ      self-surrender  
(वअत्मभावादि परित्यागः)

conclusion

An English translation of Śantideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*  
by Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton is available from Oxford  
University Press, Oxford 1996.