

Complete *Vandanā*

Introduction

Vandanā means veneration, salutation, paying homage (to *tisarana* - the *Buddha*, *dhamma* and *saṅgha*); paying homage to sacred objects (pagoda, Bodhi tree). *Vandanā* is not mere worshiping, praying or asking for something, but paying homage to *tisarana*, contemplating its qualities with Confidence (*saddhā*).

Vandana consists of **reciting *gathas* to salute** to the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *saṅgha*; **offerings** to the *Buddha* (lights, water, food etc.); ***paritta chanting*** – specially, the three of the most popular *suttas*, namely: *Mangala sutta*, *Ratana sutta* and *Karaniyametta sutta*; **paying respect** to parents, teachers and adults; **Transferring merits** to celestial beings and departed relatives.

Some of the Purposes of *Vandanā* are:

- to pay respect to a sacred person or objects,
- to calm the mind and establish the peace in the mind
- to develop confidence (*saddhā*)
- to develop the practice and create positive energy
- to establish a foundation towards meditation, listening to *dhamma*
- to accumulate merits and transfer merits to deities and departed relatives.

Proper ways of *Vandanā*

Five-Point Veneration: Both palms, elbows, knees, toes and forehead are placed on the floor during reverence before a Buddha image, sacred objects of veneration, Sangha, parents, adults.

How to walk around the sacred objects such as *Stūpa* and the *Bodhi* Tree?

Walk around the object of veneration clockwise three times, always keeping the object on your right and with both palms together.

Prime Objects of Veneration in a Buddhist Temple

1. The *Stupa* which enshrines the bodily-relics of the Buddha
2. The *Bodhi* Tree which protected the Buddha during His strive for enlightenment
3. The Images of the Buddha which are memorials erected as a mark of remembrance

A popular stanza in venerating the three objects is:

Vandāmi cetiyaṃ sabbaṃ - Sabbatṭhānesu patiṭṭhitam

Sārīrikadhātu Mahā bodhiṃ - Buddharūpaṃ sakalaṃ sadā

I salute every Stupa that stands in any place, the bodily relics, the great Bodhi Tree and All images of the Buddha.

Buddha enumerated four categories of bodily relics of individuals who are worthy to be enshrined in the *Stūpa* namely, **the Buddha, a Paccekabuddha, a Disciple of the Buddha and a Universal Monarch**

Order of Complete *Vandanā*

1. **Homage to the Buddha** - *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa*
Homage to Him. The Blessed One. The Exalted One. The Fully Enlightened One.

2. ***Tisarāṇa*** - The Three Refuges

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi - I go to the Buddha as my refuge

Dhammam saraṇaṃ gacchāmi - I go to the *Dhamma* as my refuge

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi - I go to the *Saṅgha* as my refuge

3. ***Pañca Sīla*** - Five Precepts

I. *Pānātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* - I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from destroying living beings.

II. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* - I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from taking things not given.

III. *Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* - I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct.

IV. *Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* - I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from false speech.

V. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* - I undertake to observe the precept to abstain from liquor causing intoxication and heedlessness.

4. ***Buddha Vandanā*** - Salutation to The Buddha - *Iti pi so Bhagavā*

5. ***Dhamma Vandanā*** - Salutation to the Doctrine - *Svākkhāto Bhagavatā Dhammo*

6. ***Saṅgha Vandanā*** - Salutation to the *Saṅgha* - *Supaṭipanno Bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho*

7. ***Cetiya Vandanā*** - Salutation to the Pagodas - *Vandāmi cetiyaṃ sabbam*

8. ***Bodhi Vandanā*** - Salutation to the Bodhi Tree

Yassa mūle nisinno va - Sabbāri vijayaṃ akā

Patto sabbaññutaṃ satthā - Vande taṃ Bodhi-pādapam

Seated at whose base, the teacher overcame all foes, attaining omniscience, that very Bodhi Tree do I adore.

Ime ete mahā Bodhi - Lokanāthena pūjitā

Ahaṃpi te namassāmi - Bodhirāja namatthu te

These great trees of Enlightenment, Venerated by the Lord of the world; I, too, shall salute you; May my homage be to you - O, Great Bodhi.

Pūjā – Offerings

Symbolic offerings are made to the Buddha, *Dhamma* and Sangha with contemplative gratitude and respect.

Why do we do offerings?

As a way of demonstrating gratitude and respect to the Buddha who showed us the path to liberation. Offerings (and chanting) benefit those who make the offering. For example, these practices:

- Reinforce our commitment to practice and create positive energy.
- Calm the mind: enabling us to focus (on our meditation object or on deep *dhamma* teachings).
- Cultivate humility (the quality of being humble) and the ability to let go of self-centeredness.
- Remind us of some of the key teachings of the Buddha (light replacing darkness, impermanence, etc.).

What do we Offer?

- 1. *Padīpa Pūjā* - offering of lights:** Candles or lights are lit to symbolize the light of *dhamma* that drive out ‘darkness’ (ignorance) revealing ‘light’ (wisdom).

Ghanasārappadittena - Dīpena tama-dhamṣinā

Tiloka-dīpaṃ sambuddhaṃ - Pūjayāmi tamo-nudaṃ

With lights brightly shining, abolishing this gloom, I adore the Enlightened One, The Light of the three worlds.

- 2. *Sugandha Pūjā* - offering of incense:** Incense symbolizes the fragrance of pure moral conduct - Reminds us to cultivate good conduct (observe the precepts).

Ghandhasambhārayuttena - Dhūpenāhaṃ sugandhinā

Pūjaye pūjaneyyaṃ taṃ - Pūjābhajanamuttamaṃ

With perfumed incense, and fragrant smoke, I worship the Exalted One, who is great and worthy of worship.

- 3. *Puppha Pūjā* - offering of flowers:** The freshness, fragrance and beauty of flowers are impermanent – reminding us of the Buddha's teaching that all things are impermanent.

Vaṇṇagandhaguṇopetam — etaṃ kusumasantatiṃ

Pūjayāmi munindassa — Sirīpāda saroruhe

This mass of flowers fresh, hued and odorous, I offer at the sacred lotus-like feet of the Noble Sage.

Pujemi Buddhaṃ kusumenanena - Puññenametena ca hotu mokkhaṃ

Pupphaṃ milāyāti yathā idaṃ me - Kāyo tathā yāti vināsa-bhavaṃ

I worship the Buddha with these flowers; May this virtue be helpful for my emancipation;

Just as these flowers fade, our body will undergo decay.

4. Pānīya Pūjā – offering of water: Water symbolizes purity, clarity and calmness – what we can achieve through Samadhi and wisdom

Sugandham Sitalam Kappam – Pasanna Madhuram Subham

Pānīyametaṃ Bhagava – Patiganhatumuttama

O Lord, the Blessed One, please accept this cool, fresh water out of great compassion for us.

5. Gilānapaccaya Pūjā - offering of medicinal beverages

Adhivase tu no Bhante – Gilanapaccaya imam

Anukampaṃ upadaya – Patiganhatumuttama

O Lord, the Blessed One, may these herbal drinks be kindly accepted by you, out of great compassion for us.

6. Bhojana Pūjā - offering of food: By giving away something that we value, we unbind ourselves from our own clinging and neediness – it is a way of letting go.

Adhivase tu no Bhante – Bhojanam parikappitam

Anukampaṃ upadaya – Patiganhatumuttama

O Lord, the Blessed One, may this delicious food be kindly accepted by you, out of great compassion for us.

Asking for forgiveness of Faults

Kāyena vācā cittena - Pamādena mayā kataṃ

Accayaṃ khama me bhante - Bhūripaṇṇa tathāgata!

If by deeds, speech or thoughts heedlessly I have committed any wrong-doing, Forgive me, O Venerable, O Victor, Greatly Wise!

Merits

Anumodanā - Transference of Merits to all celestial beings and departed relatives

Aspiration –

Iminā puñṇakammena - Mā me bālasamāgamo

Sataṃ samāgamo hotu - Yāva nibbānapattiyā

By the grace of this merit that I have acquired May I never meet the foolish, but the wise until I attain final emancipation!

Important to remember;

When a Buddhist offers flowers or lights an oil lamp and ponders over the supreme qualities of the Buddha, he is not praying to anyone; these are not rites or rituals or acts of worship. The flowers that soon fade, and the flames that die down, reflect to him of the impermanence (*anicca*) of all conditioned things.

Reference: *Bhavanā Vandanā* by Ven. H. Gunaratana Matha Thera
Vandanā by Venerable Elgiriye Indaratana Maha Thera
Offerings (dhamma school class notes) by Mrs. Nandini Karunamuni