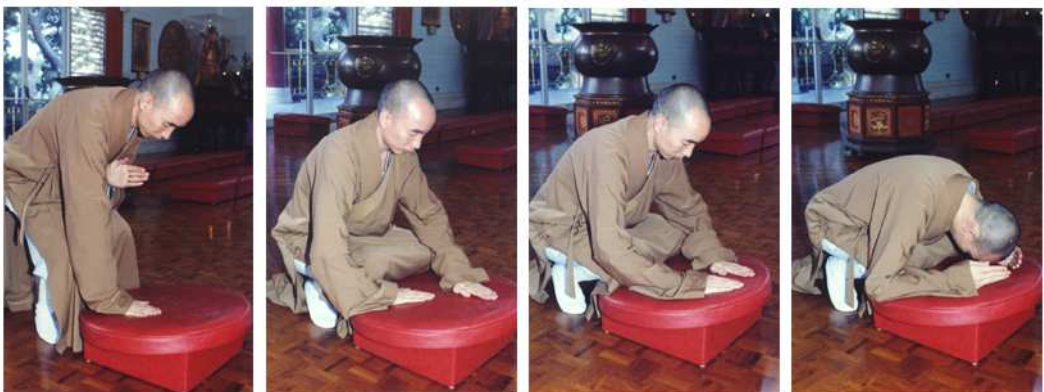
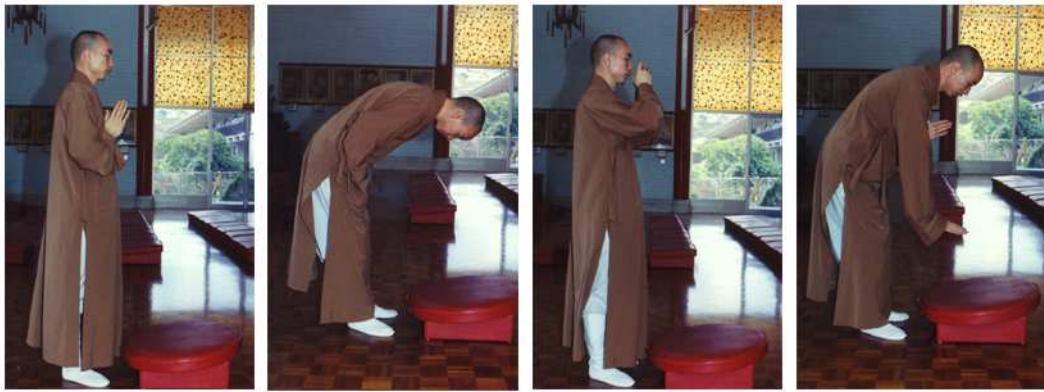
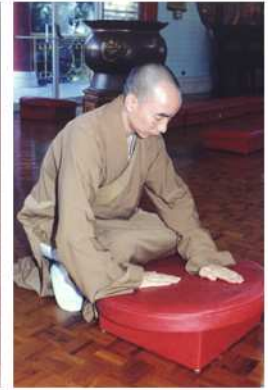
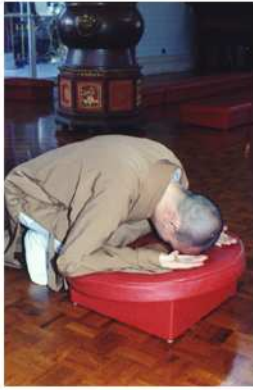


BOWING

The traditional bow performed in ceremonies in temples and elsewhere in China begins by placing your palms together in prayer formation at your sternum. Begin to lower your knees while dropping your right hand to the floor. Keep your left hand at your sternum. Continue to drop to your knees until your right hand touches the floor and can be used to catch your balance, then lower your left hand to the floor. Once both hands are on the floor a little bit in front of you, lower both knees to the floor while also lowering your forehead to the floor, and settling your buttocks to rest on your heels. Your feet will relax with your toes pointing straight back. At this point, your hands will be palm-down. Slowly rotate your palms to the upward position, fingers loosely gripping your palm, then slowly open the fingers, one at a time, beginning with the thumb, then index finger, etc. Pause here. To come up, raise your head and push up with your right hand while you bring your left hand back to your sternum. As you rise up, bring the right hand back to the sternum to join the left hand in the prayer formation. This bow is typically performed three times at the beginning of a ceremony, after lighting incense, when meeting a master, etc.





INCENSE OFFERING

This is a silent ceremony and can be done alone. Prepare a simple altar with a small bowl containing sand or salt in which stick incense can be placed. Use high quality incense if possible. The ceremony is performed with three sticks of incense representing the triple gems: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Before each incense stick is placed in the bowl, raise it from your chest to your forehead and chant silently or aloud -- first stick: I offer this incense to the Buddha; second stick: I offer this incense to the Dharma; third stick; I offer this incense to the Sangha. The ritual is done slowly and deliberately with focused attention on every detail of the actions (i.e., mindfully). At the end of the ceremony, do one bow and you may chant (silently or aloud) “Om shanti shanti shanti” (Om, peace, peace, peace).

