

4) Discuss the symbolism of the lower robe. How is it put on, and why?

The robes have great meaning. They represent those who have seen emptiness directly. You never step into your robes, you put them on over your head, out of respect for them, as they represent as the highest dharma.

The lower robe, the shamtab, Lord Buddha commanded his followers to wear to remind them of their vows and their duties. The borders on the shamtab symbolize the need to live in a monastery, studying and meditating, and thus achieve liberation. It also gives a warning that dharma practice should not be mixed with worldly practices. The patches (originally the robes were made out of scraps) are worn by fully ordained and differentiate them from other non Buddhist religions who do not have these patches.

The folding of the robes symbolizes the four noble truths:

On the right: The two folds face backwards and represent the suffering side of the four Arya truths: Life is Suffering and there is a cause to suffering. This is what we leave behind: worldly concerns and activities and the negative actions .

On the left, two folds face toward the front and represent the truths to be gained: There is a cessation and there is a path.

The two folds facing each other in the front represent method and wisdom. Or if you count all three, you can say the three Principal Paths, or the three Refuges.

5) How does the sitting cloth represent the intention to do no harm?

The sitting cloth, or *dingwa* is to spread under you whenever you are visiting a place. This cloth prevents you from dirtying someone else's home or property.

The shawl is called the:

གཟམ།

sen

The special outer shawl is called the:

ཚུས་གོས།

chugu

3) What part of the Tibetan robes was designed by Je Tsongkapa? Discuss the symbolism of this piece. (Tibetan Track, name in Tibetan)

Je Tsongkapa added the vest:

སྟོད་འགག།

dungag

The vest symbolizes impermanence: The two pointed streaks crossing each other at the armpit, represent the fangs of the lord of death. The middle of the vest is his mouth. This reminds us that we spend our life with our bodies in the jaws of death and we can die any moment.

The two sleeves are said to resemble elephant trunks and the holes the eyes of the elephant. The elephant represents ignorance. The two trunks and eyes remind us to give up the two forms of ignorance (liking and disliking)

The two shoulders represent the lion's mane: This is because the lion is fearless, and one who practices Vinaya purely has no reason to fear.

The blue stripe on the vest is to commemorate the Chinese monks who saved the lineage in Tibet: In the 9th century, King Langdarma assassinated his younger brother who had developed Buddhism. He tried to wipe out Buddhism by destroying the sangha. 3 fully ordained monks escaped and together with 2 fully ordained chinese monks, they restored the lineage.

24. One has not committed one of the four defeats (parajika).
25. One is not someone who does not accept the law of cause and effect.
26. One is not crippled.
27. One is not an albino.
28. One is not missing any limbs.
29. One is not a royal servant or favorite of the king.
30. One has permission of the king.
31. If one does not have the permission of the king, one is in a distant country.
32. One is not renowned as a violent robber.
33. One is not a degraded wrongdoer.
34. One is not of the cobbler caste.
35. One is not of the lowest caste (blacksmith, fisherman).
36. One is not of the lowest caste of worker.
37. One is not a being other than a human being.
38. One is not a person from the Northern Continent.
39. One is not someone who has changed sex three times.
40. One is not a woman posing as a man or a man posing as a woman.
41. One is not a tyrant.
42. One does not resemble a person born from another continent or world.

2) Although there is some debate about it, there are three parts to what is formally considered the “robes”, name these three, along with the sitting cloth which all Buddhist monks and nuns carry. (Tibetan track name all four in Tibetan)

The actual robes are said to consist of three parts. There is some debate about this, but it seems to include the lower robe, the shawl and the special outer shawl:

The names of the parts are:

The lower robe is called the:

ཤམ་ཐང་ལ།

shamtab



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Part II

Answer Key Five: Taking on the Appearance

1) List 10 (out of the 42) obstacles to ordination. Why might it be important to have your parent's permission to ordain?

Any 10 of the following may be used:

1. **One is not a heretic or schismatic.**
2. **One is not under 15 years of age.**
3. **If one is under 15 years of age, one is able to scare away crows (i.e. one is big enough to scare away a gathering of big birds.).**
4. **If able to scare away crows, one is not under seven years old.**
5. **One is not a slave.**
6. **One is not in financial debt.**
7. **One has permission from one's parents.**
8. **If one does not have one's parents' permission, one is in distant country (i.e. it takes more than seven days to contact them.).**
9. **One is not ill (with a physical or mental disability that would interfere with monastic life, study and meditation).**
10. **One has not violated a bhikshuni.**
11. **One is not living as a thief or spy.**
12. **One is not of different views (doubting whether to follow Dharma or not to follow it).**
13. **One is not abiding in wrong views (non-Buddhist views).**
14. **One is not a hermaphrodite.**
15. **One is not a eunuch.**
16. **One is not a spirit.**
17. **One is not an animal.**
18. **One is not involved with a heretic or schismatic.**
19. **One has not killed one's mother.**
20. **One has not killed one's father.**
21. **One has not killed an arhat.**
22. **One has not caused a schism in the sangha.**
23. **One has not maliciously drawn blood from the body of a Buddha.**