

From the Vajra Sutra

अथ खड्गायुष्मान्सुभृतिरुत्थायासनाद्
एकांसमुत्तरासङ्गं कृत्वा दक्षिणं जानु-
यष्टुलं पृथिव्यां प्रतिष्ठाप्य येन
भगवांस्तैनाञ्जलिं प्रणम्यं भगवन्तम्
एतदवौचत्

ATHA KHALV ĀYUṢMĀN SUBHŪTIR UTTHĀYĀSANĀD
EKĀMSAM UTTARĀSĀNGAṀ KṚTVĀ DAKṢINAM JĀNU-
MAṆḌALAM PṚTHIVYĀM PRATIṢṬHĀPYA YENA
BHAGAVĀMS TENĀÑJALIM PRANAMYA BHAGAVANTAM
ETAD AVOCAT.

Then the Elder Subhuti, having arisen from his seat, having bared one shoulder of his upper garment, having placed his right knee on the ground, and having placed his palms together before the Honored One, said this to the Honored One:

The uttarāsaṅga is one of the three robes which, along with the begging bowl (patrā) and sitting cloth (niśidana), are the basic possessions of a Bhikshu. The general name for the robes, which in some traditions developed into precept "sashes," is kaṣāya. The name refers to the stain-like reddish-yellow color which is the regulation for the robe. When differentiated, there are three types of robes or sashes. All three of them are rectangular in shape and are comprised of a fixed number of pieces of cloth.

The Three Robes

1. The saṅghāṭī. As the name indicates, this is the "assembly robe," worn when the Sangha convenes on formal occasions such as the bimonthly precept recitation and ordination. It is comprised of nine or more pieces of cloth and so is often referred to as "the nine-piece kaṣāya." It is also called "the great robe."

2. The uttarāsaṅga. This is the "upper robe" or "outer robe," because it

is worn over the antarvāsaka. It is also called "the seven-piece kaṣāya."

3. The antarvāsaka. This is the "inner robe," which is worn next to the body. It is also called "the five-piece kaṣāya."

One of the twelve types of ascetic practice sanctioned by Shakyamuni Buddha is to own no other clothes than one set of those three robes.

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