

# The Robe in Buddhist Scriptures: Its Development Through Social & Cultural Contexts

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## Key Words found in the Beginning of the Buddha's Period:

### 1. Kasaya, Uttarasanga and Color

In the early period<sup>1</sup> of the Buddha's career, there is no clear-cut evidence concerning the clothing-style of the Buddha and Bhikkhus, or what kind of cloth was used in those days. We are informed that Prince Siddhattha left the palace, had his hair cut and partook in the priest-life at the bank of Anoma River. He led homeless-life among two groups of recluses: Samana (priest) and Brahmana.

Having taken up the priesthood, Samana Siddhattha approached two hermits: Alara Ramagotta and Uddaka Ramabutta, with a view to learn the practices and reach liberation. Then Samana Siddhattha attained eight attainments; four form-trances and four formless trances. There is also no evidence of the color and clothing-style that the two hermits wore and used.

Having achieved Enlightenment, the Buddha (Samana Siddhattha) gave his first sermon to group of five Brahmanas: Kondanna, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama, let you lead religious life for the end of suffering'. In these events, there are no mentions of whatever appearance of robes that they wore, the color, shape, or size. It, however, is reason able for us here to assume that the people in those days who took priesthood might wear whatever cloth as they did before being the priest. In the matter of robe, there was no specific

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<sup>1</sup> **Editor Comment** – "Tradition" suggests that the god, Indra [as Sakka] offered a set of robes to Siddhattha, an account of this can be found from: [http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali\\_names/g/gotama.htm](http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/g/gotama.htm) accessed on 5 May 2007, which states "he gives all his ornaments to Channa, and with his sword cuts off hair and beard, throwing them up into the air, where Sakka takes them and enshrines them in the Cūlāmani-cetiya in Tāvātimsa. The Brahmā Ghatikāra offers Gotama the eight requisites of a monk, which he accepts and adopts." Here, there is no mention of the style of robes. However: [http://www.buddhanet.net/bud\\_t04.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/bud_t04.htm), accessed on 5 May 2007, states that Siddhattha put on hermit robes. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/ptf/buddha.html> says: "So at a later time, when I was still young, black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life, having shaved off my hair & beard — though my parents wished otherwise and were grieving with tears on their faces — I put on the ochre robe and went forth from the home life into homelessness." This quote originates from the *Majjhima-nikaya, Mahasaccaka Sutta MN 36*.

regulation for the disciples of the Buddha. The identity which made them differ from other groups of renunciates, were: hairstyles and beard – shaved off to mark that these priests belonged to Samana Sakyaputta group. However, one passage in Samantapasadika, the Vinaya – Commentary tells us that the Buddha used the red – colored robe, as found in that commentary:

**The Buddha spreads the right hand from the red-colored robe<sup>2</sup>, talks to the persons who desire to be a monk with sound like a Brahman's sound "come to be monk, let you lead religious life for the end of suffering". Soon after finishing these words, the laity disappears, monkhood appears. An ordination is accomplished. Those peoples have the bald-head, dressed in Kasava (ochre-robe, or saffron robe); wearing one, covering one and putting one on shoulder.**

The key issues we have got here are those of the robe's color and the style of dressing of the monks. Even though we cannot be sure that the red color has been fixed and the style of wearing has been fixed by the Buddha. Another passage in Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga, mentioning the Buddha's sayings:

**O monks, now let you give an ordination (to the people) in those directions, in those rural areas. Monks should give an ordination like this; in the beginning, you inform them who desire to be a monk to have their hair and beard cut, to put on Kasaya (Kasava), to wear the upper robe opening one shoulder, to give the homage at the foot of monks...**

The key words about robes we got here are "Kasaya" with its meaning (implying its color) and "Uttarasanga." Kasaya (Kasava) means robe dyed with astringent decoction (some definition: dyed with orange color), the saffron robe. Uttarasanga means the upper robe.

It is assumed that the recluses in those days used the Uttarasanga to differentiate them from other people in society. When heretical teacher named Uruvela Kassapa (of Uruvela Senanigama, or Bodhgaya) was converted to the Buddha's doctrine, he also wore the upper robe (Uttarasanga) opening one shoulder and approached the Buddha to ask for ordination. This story serves as evidence to come some extent.

Tracing back to the meaning of Kasaya (Kasava), even though it is not clear what the exact color really is, we can assume in some extent from the Buddha's allowance about six kinds of robe – dyes; dye from roots, dye from stems, dye from bark, dye from leaves, dye from flowers and dye from fruits. Consequently, the Kasaya may comprise of any color

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<sup>2</sup> Here Pali-Term is Rattapamsukulacivara; Ratta (red), Pamsukula (rags) from a dust heap or robes from a coffin.

depending upon these dyes. The key point is that it should be mixed color - it should not be pure color. We find data in Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga<sup>3</sup> as follows:

When the group of six monks wore robes that were all dark green etc., the Buddha, having known this matter, said:

**O monks, robes that are all dark green [or blue] are not to be worn, robes that are all yellow are not to be worn, robes that are all red are not to be worn, robes that are all crimson are not to be worn, robes that are all black are not to be worn, robes that are all dyed brownish-yellow [the color of a centipede's back] are not to be worn, robes that are all dyed reddish-yellow [the color of withered leaves] are not to be worn... Whoever should wear one, there is an offence of wrong-doing.**

## 2. Wearing - style

The noteworthy point in this matter is Pali phrase “Ekamsam Uttarasamgam Katva...”putting on the upper robe with one shoulder open”. This phrase is available in all classes of the Buddhist scripture. The wearing – style in this manner was a tradition of ancient Indians in those days. When the ancient Indians had a plan to approach the Elder, or the sacred place, traditionally they like to put on the upper robe with one shoulder open. This is how to wear when they are staying in their own dwelling – place.

How did the monks in those days dress when they went outside? In this matter, the Pali phrase “Pattacivaramadaya...” should be taken into consideration. “Pattacivaramadaya” means “taking alms-bowl and yellow robe”. This passage is used to describe the scene in the morning time when the monks are going to travel around for alms. It is assumed that in the time of the Buddha, when the morning time comes, the session for traveling for alms, the monks while staying within the dwelling-place area wear only the inner robe (Antaravasaka) and take the alms-bowl as well as upper robe (Civara = Uttarasanga), soon after they get out of the dwelling – place area nearly to village area, then they wear the upper robe (Uttarasanga). It is very strange. One passage supporting this event found in Buddhist literary work [*Ed.: citation needed*] states, as follows:

**In the morning, monks wore the inner robe, took the alms – bowl as well as upper robe (Civara – Uttarasanga) traveled in the Valanja city for alms.**

Another [source needed] passage is as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Recall: “I allow you, monks, six kinds of dyes: dye from roots, dye from stems, dye from bark, dye from leaves, dye from flowers, dye from fruits.” - as translated by I.B. Horner in the Vinaya-Pitaka Volume IV, Mahavagga VIII, p. 405 – Pali Text Society 1996. Today, standard-dyed robes are purchased primarily by lay people for offering to monks.

**At that time, the Blessed One wore the inner robe (Antaravasaka), took the alms – bowl as well as upper robe (Civara – Uttarasanga) accompanied by Ananada the Elder...**

### **3. Pamsukula**

The monks in the beginning of the Buddha's time mostly sought wearing-cloth by themselves, from public/common-places. Sometimes villagers may wrap a corpse with cloth, take it to the forest and leave it there in the burial-grounds; sometimes the villagers threw away the useless cloth. These discarded cloths are called "Pamsukula" which means "cloth on dust heap" (rag-robles). The monks who wanted the cloth for making the robes (Civara) picked up this material to make the wearing-robe. This is the old tradition. Later, householders began to support monks with many requisites and other facilities. The monks accepted this convenience for leading the holy-life. There were no difficulties in seeking the cloth for them. The monks, therefore, had two standards of conduct pertaining to the robe; receiving the robe from householders and searching for the robe from dust heap (rag-robe). The latter one is called "Pamsukulikanka".

### **4. Sanghati (outer cloak) and Civara (likely upper robe)**

The words "Sanghati" and "Civara" were popularly used when the relation system between preceptor (Upajjhaya) and pupil (Saddhiviharika) had been set up in the Buddha's period. These two words were seen in monastic customs called "Upajjhayavatta"<sup>4</sup> and "Saddhiviharikavatta"<sup>5</sup>

The noteworthy point is that in the methods of all ordinations except method called "Yatticatutthakamma – upasampada",<sup>6</sup> there have been no words "Sanghati" and "Civara".

What does it mean? In the beginning of the Buddha's time, in the process of ordaining, there was no regulation about the robe. It was not necessary for the sons of respectable families (Kulaputta) to prepare the robes. They could seek and obtain it after getting ordination. Later on, a non-appropriate situation occurred in the Sangha: villagers blamed the monks who went around for alms without wearing any robe (naked monks). The Buddha set forth the rule;

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<sup>4</sup> The service-frame for pupil to take care of preceptor.

<sup>5</sup> The service-frame of preceptor to take care of pupil.

<sup>6</sup> This kind of ordination is the Sangha's official activity. This word means the activity with one motion and three announcements.

**O monks, you should not ordain the sons of respectable families (Kulaputta) who do not have robes (Civara), you who ordained the one mentioned above, are sentenced to an offence of wrong-doing.**

After the Buddha allowed the monks to use the ordination method called “Yatticatutthakamma – uppasampada”, the person who desired to be ordained had to prepare the eight requisites. The three robes were also included in these.

### **Householders’ Club**

The passages in Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga help us much in this story. Before the Buddha’s allowance the monks to receive the cloth given by householders, the monks mostly search for the cloth from cemetery in the forest. Later on, the doctor named Jivaka Komarabhacca requested the Buddha to receive the Cloth called “Siveyyaka”.<sup>7</sup> Beside this, Jivaka Komarabhacca asked the Buddha to give an allowance to the monks to receive the cloth given by householders. The Buddha gave an allowance as follow:

**I allow you, O monks, householder’s robes. Whoever wishes may be a rag-robe wearer; whoever wishes may consent to (accept) householder’s robes.**

**And I, O monks, commend satisfaction with the one or the other.**

Having got an allowance from the Buddha in this matter, at that time various kinds of robe-materials accrued to the monks. Then it occurred to the monks: “Now, what kind of robe-materials are allowed by the Buddha, what are not allowed?” They told this matter to the Buddha. The Buddha said:

**O monks, I allow six kinds of robe – materials: linen, cotton, silk, wool, coarse hempen cloth, canvas.**

Now at that time, the monks consented to householders’ robes, but being scrupulous, they did not consent to rag-robes. The confusion occurred to the monks: “the Buddha allowed only the householders’ robes, he did not allow the rag-robes. The Buddha said: “O monks, I allow him who consents to the householders’ robes to consent also to rag-robes. And I, O monks, commend satisfaction with both”. Later, however, the tradition of using the rag-robes became much-admired among the Order. It is the strict way for eradication of the defilements. This tradition is called “Pamsukulikanga” which means the monks endowed with strict quality by using the rag-robes in daily-life.

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<sup>7</sup> “Siveyyaka” the cloth which is used by the people of Kuru State to wrap the corpse and take it to the cemetery. The vultures (hatthikingasakuna) take the corpse with Siveyyaka to the peak of Himalaya Mountain, pull it from the corpse and then eat the corpse. The forest-hunters see that cloth, pick up bring it and give to the King.

### **Robe's Cut-Pattern:**

In the beginning of the Buddha's period, the monks may use various patterns for robes. The passages in Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga, tell us that one day, the Buddha set out on tour for Dakkhinagiri. The Lord saw the field of Magadha, laid out in strips, laid out in lines, laid out in embankment, laid out in squares. Having seen this, the Buddha addressed the Venerable Ananda, saying:

**Now, do you Ananda, see the field of Magadha laid out in strips, laid out in lines, laid out in embankment, laid out in squares? ...Are you able, Ananda, to provide robes like this for the monks ?**

Then the Venerable Ananda, having provided robes for several monks, approached the Buddha and showed the robes provided by him to the Lord. Then the Buddha, on that occasion, addressed the monks, saying:

**O monks, clever is Ananda; O monks, of great intelligence is Ananda, in as much as he can understand in detail the meaning of that which was spoken by me in brief, and can make a cross-seam and can make a short cross-seam and can make a circular seam and can make a central piece and can make side piece and can make a neck-piece and can make a knee-piece and can make an elbow-piece; and what is cut up must be roughly drawn together, suitable for recluses and not coveted by opponents. I allow you, O monks, an outer cloak that is cut up, an upper robe that is cut up, an inner robe that is cut up.**

These Buddha's sayings tell us that before this the monks' robes are not cut up in pieces as they have been seen in the present day. Following the Buddha's address to Ananda, monks began using the pattern derived from Magadha fields.

### **Three Robes**

After the Buddha gave an allowance for monks to receive the robe-materials given by householders, many robes accrued to monks. One day the Buddha set out on tour from Rajagaha to Vesali accompanied by several monks. Some of those monks put a bundle of robes on their heads, some on their backs, some on their hips.

Having seen these undesirable scenes, it occurred to the Buddha: "These foolish men have turned too quickly to abundance of robes; suppose I were to set a limit, were to establish bounds as to robes for monks?"

One night in the winter time, the Buddha sat down in the open air with only one robe. As the first watch was ending, the Lord became cold, then he put on a second robe. As the

middle watch was ending, the Lord became cold, then he put on a third robe. As the last watch was ending, the Lord became cold, then he put on a fourth robe, At that time the Buddha was not cold. Then it occurred to the Buddha:

**Sons of respectable families in this Dhamma and Vinaya susceptible to cold, afraid of cold, are able to keep themselves going with three robes. Suppose I were to set a limit, were to establish bounds as to robes for monks and were to allow three robes? I allow you, O monks, three robes: a double Sanghati (outer cloak), a single Uttarasanga (upper robe), a single Antaravasaka (inner robe).**

In the beginning of the Buddha's period, the Kasaya-robe was used as wearing and covering materials, the upper robe (Uttarasanga) was used as one shoulder covering. After the Buddha's allowance of three robes, three key Pali words; Sanghati, Uttarasanga and Antaravasaka, were well known to the public. "Sanghati" was used for covering outside to release the cold. "Uttarasanga"<sup>8</sup> was used for covering with one shoulder open. "Antaravasaka"<sup>9</sup> was used for covering the lower body-area.

Only three robes are allowed for each monk. According to the disciplinary rule, the extra robe is not allowed. Whoever wants to possess an extra robe, they must abide by some rules; that is, the extra robe must be assigned. That is, the owner- monks must make it belong to another monk. This process is called "Vikappa" (*make the robe belong to two persons*, co-owners), and after that the owner-monks must get an allowance from the other co-owner monk before using those robes; otherwise they are sentenced to an offence of expiation involving forfeiture.<sup>10</sup>

### Three Robes and Some Vinaya Rules

When the Buddha allowed monks to receive robe-materials from householders, many householders supported the monks with robes. The monks also collected the robes of various kinds, various sizes, various colors, various formats, etc. These behaviors caused unsatisfactoriness among householders who saw the events or heard of those. Therefore, as a consequence the Buddha set forth the rules of trainings<sup>11</sup> involving robes:

#### 1. Rules for monks (Bhikkhu)

- (1) Whoever monk should wear an *extra robe*, there is an offence of expiation involving forfeiture.

<sup>8</sup> According to the current Thai Buddhist tradition: the "Uttarasanga" or '*Ciavara*' is for covering the body.

<sup>9</sup> The "Antaravasaka" is the lower skirt-like covering called "Sabong" in the Thai Buddhist tradition.

<sup>10</sup> Pali phrase for "expiation involving forfeiture" is *Nissakkiyapacittiya*. It is the name of one kind of offence.

<sup>11</sup> Pali phrase for "rules of trainings" is *Sikkhapadani*.

(2) When the robe-material is settled, when a monk's *kathina* (privileges) have been removed, if this monk should be away, separated from his three robes even for one night, there is an offence to expiation involving forfeiture.

(3) When the robe-material is settled, when a monk's *kathina* (privileges) have been removed, if robe-material should accrue to the monk not at the right time...

These data are seen in Vinaya Pitaka, (Bhikkhu) Vibhanga. There are many more rules of trainings involving monk's robes. The key words here are "extra robe" "Kathina" and "right time". The Pali term "extra robe" is *Atirekacivara*. It means the robe (Civara) other than three robes which are fixed by the Vinaya rule.

The Kathina here means the special meritorious performance in the special period, within one month after rain retreat; starting from 1<sup>st</sup> waning moon day of 11<sup>th</sup> lunar month to 15<sup>th</sup> waxing moon day of 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month. The time during these periods are determined to be the "right time" here. The Pali term for the "right time" is *Civarakala*.

The right time (Civarakala) can be extended up to the 15<sup>th</sup> waxing moon day of 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month in the following year in case the monks have passed three months of rain retreat, participated in Kathin offering and rejoiced in it, then they have privileges for five months to be away from their three robes. There is no offence of expiation occurring to them. In reality, there are many meaning for the word "Right time". Only one meaning is said here.

Apart from the right time mentioned above, monks are allowed to keep extra robe for ten nights, after that the monks must make the extra robe belong to another monk (this is called "Vikappa" = *make the robe belong to two persons*), and get an allowance from that monk before using those robes as mentioned earlier.

## 2. Rules of Nuns (Bhikkhuni)

The nuns mostly abide by the same rules of trainings as the monks do (181 rules of trainings are general for monks and nuns, 130 rules of trainings are specific for nuns). In the matter of nuns' robes, the regulation involving robes is basically the same as monks, with some differences:

Below, are many passages found in Vinaya Pitaka, (Bhikkhuni) Vibhanga:

(1) Whoever nun, thinking that robe-material (given) not at the right time is robe-material (given) at the right time, having allotted it should have it distributed, there is an offence of expiation involving forfeiture.

(2) Whoever nun should wear an extra robe, there is an offence of expiation involving forfeiture.



- (3) Whoever nun, not having given up her household-robe, should make use of it, there is an offence of expiation.

The interesting issue which is different between Vinaya rule of monks and Vinaya for nuns involving robes is that the nuns are allowed to possess five robes, while the monks are allowed to possess three robes. *The extra robe, therefore, for nuns (Bhikkhuni) means other robe than these five robes.* Three robes for monks are; Sanghati (outer cloak), Uttarasanga (upper robe), and Antaravasaka (Antaravasaka), Bathing robe and Breast-wrapping.

## Tradition in the Present Day Thailand - In comparison with the Buddha's Period

### 1. Wearing Style

The wearing-manner of the robes, in the Buddha's period, was very important and was often associated with noble behavior – or, in the good 'tradition' of monks. Monks should keep the state of their robes in their mind, though there is not grave offence occurring to monks who do not follow regulations.

In Vinaya Pitaka, (Bhikkhu) Vibhanga, there are many passages found in the section involving good tradition of monks such as: at the Buddha's time, the group of six monks dressed with the inner robe hanging down in front and behind, put on the upper robe hanging down in front and behind. The Buddha set forth these rules of training:

**This rule of training should be observed by monks 'I will wear the inner robe all round'.**

The inner robe should be worn evenly [parallel to the ground] thus 'round' – worn around for covering the circle of the navel [belly-button], the circles of the knees. Whoever, out of disrespect, dresses with an inner robe hanging down [unevenly] in front and behind, there is an offence of wrong-doing. In another section of these rules for trainings, the Buddha set forth these rules of training:

**A rule of training should be observed by monks 'Not lifting up the robes will I go sit down amidst the houses.'**

The monks should not go sit down among the houses with the robes lifted up. Whoever out of disrespect having lifted up the robe on one side or on both, goes sits down amidst the houses, there is an offence of wrong-doing.

In principle, the wearing style of Thai monks conforms to the disciplinary rules. There may be some manners that are deviated, depending upon local traditions and situations. It is noteworthy that in the Buddha's period, the Sanghati (outer cloak) was used as outside-covering cloth. The Uttarasanga (upper robe) was used as covering cloth (opening one

shoulder). The Anataravasaka (inner robe) was used as putting-on cloth. On the contrary, Thai monks in the present day use the Sanghati (outer cloak), as putting cloth (on left shoulder), Uttarasanga (upper robe, or Civara) as total-covering, or covering cloth (opening one shoulder conforming to situations), Anataravasaka (inner robe, or Sabong) as putting on cloth (from waist down to half of leg). Nowadays, there are two dressing methods according to tradition of Thai monks:

- (1) total-cover dressing is sub-divided in two;
  - 1) folding clockwise the edge of Uttarasanga (upper robe, or Civara), lifting it up, then putting on left shoulder, pressing the fold with left hand.
  - 2) folding anti-clockwise the edge of Uttarasanga (upper robe, or Civara), lifting it up, then putting on left shoulder, not pressing the fold with left hand, but spreading the right hand out.
- (2) half-cover dressing is sub-divided into four;
  - 1) (a). wearing by putting the robe on left shoulder , or(b). pleating the robe then putting it on left shoulder, or (c). laying over the robe on the back or (d). folding the robe then putting it on left shoulder.

Moreover, Thai monks in the present day like to pleat the Uttarasanga (upper robe), put it on left shoulder, and then put the Sanghati (outer cloak) on it, then tightening it by wrapping around the body with small cloth [like an outer-belt], especially when they participate in ceremony within any monastery.

## 1. Color

There are four main colors of robes in Thailand that the monks use nowadays: saffron robe (“yellow” – but indeed similar to modern-day ‘safety-orange’!), black-colored robe [rarely observed], red-colored robe, and the color derived from the heartwood or core of the jackfruit tree.

## 2. Robe’s Look and Size

The Buddha set a regulation that the robes must be cut up, consisting of many pieces of cloth. The monks are not allowed to wear robes that are not cut up. Whoever should wear one, there is an offence of wrong-doing. The monks have to prepare robes like the field of Magadha. There are parts of robes as follows: a cross seam, a circular seam, a short circular seam, a central piece, a side-piece, a neck-piece, a knee-piece, an elbow-

piece. There is a line between these parts. [Robes are not to appear as being from a single piece of cloth – but sewed together from strips.]

Concerning the robe's size, what is the upper limit? What is the lower limit? There is no exact limit of size. But the smallest robe should at least consist of five sections (Khanda), the biggest one should consist of eleven sections, it should not be bigger than this. In the Buddha's period, the size of robe might depend upon the body-size of monks. As a data found in Vinaya Pitaka, (Bhikkhu) Vibhanga, there is only regulation as follows:

**Whoever monk should have a robe made the measure of a well-farer's robe (Sugata's robe), or more, there is an offence of expiation involving cutting down (Chedanaka). This is the measure here of a well-farer's robe (Sugata's robe) for a well-farer (Sugata): nine spans of the accepted span in length, 6 spans in breadth<sup>12</sup>; this is the measure of a well-farer's robe (Sugata's robe) for a well-farer (Sugata).**

The Thai text - "Vinayamukha Vol.12" tell us that there is an approximately limit for the Sanghati (outer cloak) not to be longer than 6 cubits, not broader than 4 cubits. We call it "Sanghati" in the Thai tradition. The Uttarasanga (upper robe) should not be longer than 6 cubits, not broader than 4 cubits. We call it "Civara" in the Thai tradition. The Anataravasaka (inner robe) should not be longer than 6 cubits, not broader than 2 cubits. We call it "Sabong" in the Thai tradition.

### **Three Robes, Vinaya Rules and the Modern Day Context**

Discussing about the color firstly, when we talk about the monks robes, the English term "yellow robe" is used all the times. In reality, are the monk's robes really yellow? What exact color are the robes? As the passage found in Samantapasadika, the Vinaya-Commentary tells us that the Buddha used red-colored robes.

Having considered the meaning of Kasaya (Kasava-saffron robe) and the Buddha allowance about six kinds of robe-dyes as mentioned in Vinaya Pitaka, Mahavagga earlier; we can assume that the Kasaya should comprise of any color depending upon the material used for the color-dye. Several substances should be used – not a singular 'pure' color – of mixed coloration.

Whatever color robes do not matter, condition that those robes should not be all dark green, all yellow, all red, all crimson, all black, all dyed brownish-yellow and all dyed reddish-yellow. The monks must have a common sense of using the robe that may be whatever

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<sup>12</sup> 1 span of Sugata is equal to 3 spans of the middle-sized man in the present day.

color. They should not wear robes that reflect their defilements and against householder's feeling. *For example, the robes should not be decorative designed, the flashy-colored robes are also not suitable, and the gray-colored robes are not suitable for monks.* The robe's color should be in accordance with the disciplinary rule plus local tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, discussing about the format of robes; the robes can be one piece of cloth consisting of five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, or eleven sections like a field of Magadha. Or it may be one piece of cloth like an Antaravasaka (inner robe: Sabong) in Thai monks' tradition. Or it can be trousers like the Mahayana monks dress. It does not matter, depending upon tradition and situations.

Thirdly, concerning the number of robes, it should be 'three robes'. We have already known the facts according to the disciplinary rules, monks are allowed to possess only one set of three robes (Sanghati, Uttarasanga, and Antaravasaka). The extra robe is not allowed. The purpose of Vinaya rules in this matter is to inform the monks not to disturb the villagers involving robes.

Talking a look at the situations in the Buddha's period, the rich householders like to support monks with robes that make monks indulge in collecting the robes. Suppose those monks travel and stay in some places where the poor householders are staying - how can they support monks with robes? According to Vinaya rules, the monks are not allowed to ask robes from the householders who are not their relatives. Whoever monks do so. There is an offence of expiation involving forfeiture.

In the present day context, three robes for monks and five robes for nuns as fixed in Vinaya rule are suitable. When the monks need one more or two more robes, there are many exceptions, or channels to proceed without violating the Vinaya rules. Additionally, in some places and some times, the monks may wear winter-clothes in the winter, apart from three robes, depending upon situations; but monks have to keep in their mind that only three robes are permitted.

Fourthly concerning the size, it is noteworthy to mention that in the Buddha's period, when we talk about three robes (Pali: Ticivara) - it means: Sanghati (outer cloak), Uttarasanga (upper robe), and Antaravasaka (inner robe), and these three robes were the same size.

Later time, there is loose stipulation that the Sanghati (outer cloak) should not be longer than six cubits, not broader than four cubits. The Uttarasanga (upper robe) should not be longer than six cubits, not broader than four cubits. The Antaravasaka (inner robe)

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<sup>13</sup> [Editor's comment: additionally, robes should not be embroidered, or resemble robes of other sects, according to different passages from the Vinaya.]

should not be longer than six cubits, not broader than two cubits, conditioning that the size of those robes should not be equal to a well-farer's robe (Sugata's robe).

The wearing-style may also be varied in times and places.

In case there are no indicators that the wearing-style, color, format, size and whatever involving robes conforming to or against the disciplinary rules. How can we judge the case that which one is right, which one is wrong? During the Buddha's time, a certain consciousness arose among some monks, as to this and that occasion, thinking: "Now, what is permitted by the Lord?" What is not permitted? Pertaining to this episode, and in order to judge future considerations, reflection should be directed up this section in the Vinaya-Pitaka, Mahavagga:

1. *Whatever has not been objected to as not allowable, if it fits in with what is not allowable and goes against what is allowable, that is not allowable.*
2. *Whatever has not been objected to as not allowable, if it fits in with what is allowable and goes against what is not allowable, that is allowable.*
3. *Whatever has not been permitted as not allowable, if it fits in with what is not allowable and goes against what is allowable, that is not allowable.*
4. *Whatever has not been permitted as allowable, if it fits in with what is allowable and goes against what is not allowable, that is allowable*

Finally, we have known very well that the robes are one of four requisites, which are necessities of life according to Buddhist tradition. The Buddha inculcated the monks, saying "Before using robes and after using robes, monks have to deliberately think over three robes, thinking that three robes are used not for any other purposes, but for protecting the body from cold, heat, mosquitoes, etc." The monks and nuns, therefore, should follow the Buddha's saying. We should adjust ourselves, in the meantime - we do not violate the rules amidst modern-day materialism. The disciplinary rules come first. Then the monks and nuns travel around the world to propagate the Buddha's Teaching, they can adopt and adapt the rules suitable for each situation for the benefits and happiness of the world.