

Wearing and Caring for the Wagesa

When the Wagesa is Worn

During the first meditation period of the day, have your wagesa with you at your sitting place, but wait to put it on until the end of that meditation period (but before any scripture recitation). At that point, use both hands to take the wagesa (folded in half, with the cord half on top), place it on your head with the center fold to the left, and then, with your hands in gasshō, recite the following verse (the Kesa verse):

How great and wondrous are the clothes of enlightenment,
Formless and embracing every treasure;
I wish to unfold the Buddha's Teaching
That I may help all living things.

Remove the wagesa from your head with both hands, bow with it in the holding gasshō, and, after unfolding it, touch the inside of the neck flap to the Third Eye whilst reciting the Three Homages, and then put it on whilst reciting the Three Homages once more. The wagesa is then worn during morning service or one's private recitation of scriptures.

For any subsequent meditation periods during the day, wear your wagesa while meditating. If you are not already wearing the wagesa when you sit down to meditate, then put it on as soon as you sit down, this time by placing it on your head and reciting the Three Homages (instead of the Kesa verse, which is recited only once each day), and then putting it on as described above.

To take off your wagesa, lift it over your head with both hands, fold it so that the cord half is on top, and then touch it to the Third Eye whilst reciting the Three Homages, and then put it into its case (if you have one) or in the place where you store it.

Depending on your circumstances, you may choose to wear your wagesa at other times as well, such as when you are at home, in some cases at your workplace, and certainly when at a Priory or meditation group. When doing physical work, please keep safety and cleanliness in mind, taking care to remove your wagesa or to tuck it beneath your clothes in situations where it might get entangled with something and cause an accident, or where it might get soiled.

During meals, to prevent food from getting on your wagesa, rotate it clockwise around your neck so that the cord is in back; when you are reciting just the Five Thoughts at the beginning of the meal, turn your wagesa around after you bow to your plates and say the Three Homages at the end of the recitation of the Five Thoughts; when doing the full mealtime ceremonial, turn it around after you bow to your plates during the reciting of "As we spread the vessels of the Lord [bow], we pray that ..." At the end of the meal, just before the recitation of the closing verse ("The universe is as the boundless sky..."), turn your wagesa around in a clockwise direction so that the cord is once again in front.

Remove your wagesa before entering a bathroom. When putting it back on afterwards, touch the inside of the neck flap to the Third Eye whilst reciting the Three Homages, and then place it around your neck as you recite the Three Homages once more.

Storing the Wagesa

A small cloth case such as those used for rosaries is the best way to store a wagesa. If you are able to sew one yourself, use two pieces of cloth the same size, one white for a lining, another of colored cloth for the case itself. A small case with a flap of material which folds over and snaps shut is ideal.

When not wearing your wagesa, place it in an elevated place in your home where it will not be disturbed, such as a private altar, or a high shelf where there is a statue of a Buddha or Bodhisattva.

In general, treat your wagesa with great respect, as it symbolizes your resolve to live in accord with the Precepts and to make the Buddha's Truth one with yourself. The wagesa must never be sat upon, trodden on, allowed to touch the ground or worn in the toilet; if it should accidentally fall on the ground, pick it up with care, place it on your head and re-bless it.

Materials and Cleaning

The wagesa is made of cotton-polyester cloth, which is hand washable in warm water and regular laundry soap. The cord is rayon, also washable, but some care should be taken lest the stitching holding the cord to the wagesa come loose; for the same reason, it is best to line dry the wagesa rather than putting it in a dryer.

What to Do if Your Wagesa is Lost

It is a good idea to have your wagesa labeled discreetly on the inside either with a name label or your initials sewn in by hand with thread. If you lose your wagesa, please call us and we will provide a new one to replace it as soon as we can.