

III. RABJUNG SHEMDAP

[NOTE: THE WAY THAT THE SEWING OF SANGHA ROBES IS DONE IS NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME AS THE WAY SEWING IS DONE IN THE WEST. THEREFORE, PLEASE READ ALL THE DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE BEGINNING TO SEW YOUR FABRIC]

The Buddha did not speak about any difference in the lower robe, or shemdap among the different levels of ordained Sangha. However, according to the culture of the Tibetan Mahayana Tradition, 3 different shemdaps have come into being. These 3 different shemdaps are designed to show the 3 different levels of ordination. Those people, who have left the householder's life and have taken the vows of Rabjung, wear a plain shemdap. Those individuals, who have taken Novice vows, Getsul & Getsulma, can wear a shemdap which has 2 additional side panels. However, many Novice Sangha continue to wear the plain shemdap. The Fully Ordained Sangha, Bhikshu & Bhikshuni, members wear a shemdap that is designed with the addition of several panels which are arranged at right angles to one another.

A. Measurements

Due to the fact that most guide systems for sewing machines are in the inch system, sewing measurements are given in this system. However, for greater accuracy in some measurements, the metric system is used, with the English system conversion as follows:

- 1 Meter = 100 cm = 1000 mm = 39 3/8 inches =
 - OR 1 yard = 36 inches = 36" = 91.5 cm = 915 mm
- 2.54 cm = 25.4 mm = 1 inch = 1"
- 1.27 cm = 12.7 mm = 1/2 inch = 1/2"
- 0.635 cm = 6.35 mm = 1/4 inch = 1/4"
- 0.3175 cm = 3.175 mm = 1/8 inch = 1/8"

B. Size of Patterns

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Like the zen, the Main Panel of the shemdap is made in 3 pieces. The total length of the shemdap is calculated by measuring the HEIGHT of the shemdap needed by a person. [The pattern provided is for a person that has a height of 42.0 inches from their waist to their ankle. This is a medium height for a person about 5 feet and 7 – 10 inches tall.] Then the length of the material to be cut would be the height + 1/2" inch for seam allowance times 3. (For layout of cutting & dimensions, see **Diagram III.a.**)

Example calculation: Height of shemdap = 42.0" [Waist to Ankle]
+ 0.5" for seam allowance
= 42.5" for each piece

$\frac{X}{3}$ [number of pieces]
= 127.5" [3.54 yards or 3.25 meters] for

total length of fabric for the Main Panel. Additional fabric is required for Top and Bottom Panels (see below).

C. Number of Pieces & Measurements (includes seam allowances)
See Diagram III.a

The Rabjung Shemdap is made up of 9 total pieces.

For this Shemdap, we have calculated the measurements as noted above for a medium height individual which translates into the following measures:

- 1) 3 pieces [of 36" wide x 42 ½" long each] comprise the Main Panel.
- 2) 6 pieces for the Top and Bottom Panels; 3 pieces form the Top Panel and 3 pieces form the Bottom (overlaid) Panel. Thus, each piece is 9 and ½" inches long x width [36"]. And each Panel is 9 ½" long x [A + B +C]= 3[36"]=108" wide *minus* seam allowances.
- 3) Adjust the size of the patterns by adding or subtracting the differences between your size and the pattern sizes.

D. Layout & Cutting Instructions for Patterns

1. Main Panel See Diagram III.a

- a. Obtain the required length of fabric, and cut it into three equal lengths. (42.5" each).
- b. Label each piece as A, B, and C.
- c. ROTATE the 3 pieces 90 degrees.
- d. NOTE: Material width in this example is 36". If a wider material is used, then adjustments to the final width of the shemdap must be made by cutting off the excess width from each piece, or just the third piece) AFTER the pieces ARE ROTATED 90 degrees.

2) Top and Bottom Panels

- a. To form the Top and Bottom Panels for the shemdap, you will need to cut 6 lengths of material. See **Diagram III.b**.
- b. The Top and Bottom Panels are formed from 3 pieces each, and are identical.
- c. Each piece is 9 and ½" inches long. The widths of the pieces correspond to the width of the A, B, and C pieces of the Main Panel [above]. In our patterns for the Rabjung and Getsul Shemdaps, this is 36" wide [width of the material] x 9 and ½" long for each piece. If you have different widths or uneven A, B, and C pieces for the Main panel of the shemdap, you must match the pieces of the Top and Bottom Panels to these widths.

E. Sewing Instructions

1) Main Panel

You will stitch with an *Overlap Seam*

Overlap Seam is made in the following way: [Diagram III.c]

- With RIGHT SIDES together, lay piece A on top of piece B, having the A piece short of meeting the B piece by $\frac{1}{4}$ ", that is, the B piece extends $\frac{1}{4}$ " past the edge of the A piece.
 - Stitch a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam [from the edge of the A piece and which is $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the edge of the B piece].
 - Fold over the extra $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the B piece to cover the raw edge of the top A piece. Pin and press. Then top stitch close to the left edge of the folded edge of the B piece to produce a finished seam on the inside of the garment. Press finished seam
- a) Using the Overlap Seam technique, stitch the B piece to the C piece. To keep the finished pieces all the same width, this time the B piece should be short of the C piece by $\frac{1}{4}$ ", and the extra $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the C piece if folded over the raw edge of the seam and stitched.
 - b) Each piece should measure 35.25" wide after sewing seams, $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance for one side, and $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance for the other side.
 - c) DO NOT yet stitch the C piece to the A piece.

2) Top and Bottom Panels

- a) Check to see that your seams on the panels will match those of the Main Panel before you sew these pieces together. Adjust for any differences. Then pin and stitch with simple, [should be approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ " seams], WITHOUT joining the final seam of the last piece with the first piece. NOTE: Since you are not using the Overlay Seam Technique, you use a $\frac{3}{4}$ " seam so that the seams will match up correctly.

3) Overlaying the Top and Bottom Panels onto the Main Panel

- a) See **Diagram III.d.** Matching the seams of the Top Panel to the seams of the Main panel, and with the WRONG SIDE of the Main Panel facing the RIGHT SIDE of the Top Panel, pin these two Panels together.
- b) Stitch the Top Panel to the Main Panel at the TOP EDGE, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. To avoid stretching of fabric causing a mismatch of seams, first stitch the middle B piece, and then the 2 outer A and C pieces, sewing from the B piece seam out to the edges of the other 2 pieces.
- c) Pin and stitch the Bottom Panel to the Main Panel in the same manner as described above for the Top Panel.

4) Joining the Shemdap into a Circle~ See Diagram III.e

- a) Turn your garment WRONG SIDE OUT. With RIGHT SIDES together, turn the garment so you can join the A piece and the C piece of the Main Panel together.

- b) Using the **Overlap Seam Technique**, first pin, then sew the above Pieces. To avoid stretching problems, sew from the middle B piece of the Main Panel outwardly, as described above.
- c) Then, turn your Garment **RIGHT SIDE OUT**.

5) Sewing Top and Bottom Panels to the Main Panel

- a) Press ¼” of the other raw edge of the Top Panel to the inside or wrong side of the Top Panel. [See **Diagram III.f.**]
- b) Fold the Top Panel over the Main Panel [so that the **RIGHT SIDE** of the Top Panel comes down and over the **RIGHT SIDE** of the Main Panel].
- c) Pin and then stitch the bottom of the Top Panel to the Main Panel at the bottom edge of the Top Panel in the same manner described above to avoid stretching of fabric and uneven matching of seams, leaving the last 10” at either end free.
- d) Top stitch the upper and lower edges of the Top Panel to within the 10” of the end, to keep these pieces squarely in place.
- e) With **RIGHT SIDES** of the Top Panel together, pin and sew the first and last pieces together, matching this seam with the seam of the Main Panel.
- f) Lay the Top Panel on top of the Main Panel, pin, press, and finish stitching the last 10” of the bottom edge of the first and last pieces of the Top Panel to the Main Panel.
- g) Repeat the procedure for the Bottom Panel. Press.

Diagrams can be found under III. Rabjung Shemdap under the title: Compressed Rabjung Shemdap Files.