

The Meaning of the Khata

The Khata is an informal term for *Jael-dhar*, the Buddhist offering scarf. It comes originally from the Tibetan tradition. A Khata is made of cotton, silk or other materials. It looks like a long scarf and has sometimes auspicious symbols or mantras inscribed or woven into the fabric. It represents the sincerity of one's offering, with no negative thoughts or motives in mind. Kathas come in in different shades of color. They are also used as a sign of recognition of one's love or respect for another, such as teacher to students, master to precept taker. The offering of Khata is something one could call a bouquet that is very reusable and meant to be displayed.

How the Khata is offered

The offering of a scarf may seem to be a simple gesture, but it has its own significance and protocol, mostly governed by tradition. In order to present a Khata it is first folded it in half length-wise. This represents the interdependence of each other. Then it is offered with open edges facing the person to whom it is being given. i.e. the folded section will be towards the giver. This represents an open and pure heart without negative thoughts or motives.

For special occasions, honored monks, teachers, dignitaries and elders, as well as those taking the Precepts, the Khata is given with folded hands near the forehead, with a humble bow before them while bending the head over and palms joined in respect. In turn, the receiver will bow and receive his or her Khata as a token of blessing by putting it over his or her neck, so it hangs down equally over both sides of the chest. It is also custom to put Khatas over statues, thangkas, pictures of masters and altar spaces. A Khata offered to a master and received back by a student will be cherished and preciously kept as it is now a very special memento, talisman and protector.

For special events, such as marriage, birthdays, new year, farewell and safe journey, welcome home, celebration of events, anniversaries, house blessings, memorials, we can offer Khatas, or lay it over the body of a sick or deceased person.