

SOMES NOTES ON WONG-KUR

Namgyal Rinpoche referred to Wong-kur (sometimes translated as initiation or empowerment) as "an outer and visible sign of an inner, invisible grace." In the Vajrayana schools of Buddhadharma, Wong-kur is the source from which all blessings flow.

Transcendent, awakened consciousness is the ground of being or essence of mind. Though you have never been separate from that, recognition may be hazy or absent. Wong-kur provides a ritual display (a high level of spiritual theatre, if you like) of awakened consciousness manifesting in form. This takes place through the transformation of the Lama, who should be regarded as a pure emanation of the principle being transmitted. Openness to, or resonance with, the mind of the Lama stimulates your mind primarily through a process akin to sympathetic vibration and secondarily through the presentation of depth symbols to all the physical senses and the mind.

Prepare yourself through purification: bathe, wear clean clothes, eat lightly and focus your mind in a manner that produces a feeling of calm, expectant openness. If you are familiar with the Vajra Sattva meditation, that is an excellent basis, but any practice that helps you feel tranquil and alert is good. Bring an offering¹ with you, so that you feel you have something to give when invited to do so. Realize that the ultimate offering is your own primordially pure mind, releasing itself into the vastness of primordially pure mind, thus honouring the awakened state within yourself. This is traditionally symbolized by offering a white scarf to the Lama. (Some white cloth will be available.)

Come early and be prepared to wait a bit. Events like these happen when they're ready, which is not always according to the clock! Don't chatter, but keep your mind quiet and aware. When you are invited into the Shrine Room, you'll be offered water to symbolically purify your mind and a little bit of rice (for an offering) to take in with you. Try not to dawdle -- find a place to sit and perform some symbolic act of humility and respect. Traditionally, initiates make three prostrations, but bowing, or even smiling in anticipation is good preparation.

The Lama will have performed extensive preparation before entering the Shrine Room. Be intensely aware of everything (s)he does and says. Be receptive to every sensory experience, not trying to remember or understand conceptually, but allowing each impression to be completely and perfectly received. At the same time, remember you are part of a group, and be very aware when moving about so that neither the Lama nor your fellow initiates are distracted or impeded.

While Wong-kur is complex and serious in intent (not to mention culturally foreign to westerners) it is a joyous and spontaneous experience. Be natural and allow yourself to be in the flow of the vibration that is invoked. All that is necessary for initiation is to be touched by the Lama in a state of meditation. Realization can come in that moment, but it is more usual that it arises as a result of dedicated practice of the meditation that has been bestowed. If you think of empowerment as a seeding, or potentiating, of enlightened consciousness in you, then your practice is what waters, weeds and cultivates so that maximum growth takes place.

¹ Traditional offerings are food, clothing, shelter and medicine. A practical alternative is to offer cash (in an envelope.) Some prefer to offer symbols like flowers, candles, incense and so forth.