

Boulder – 1984 Chariot Of Liberation Seminar – Karma Dzong

It was the first night, Friday, of the seminar – the shrine room was wall-to-wall packed. I was on duty as a kasung – posted in a chair, next to the shrine room elevator. You could hear the elevator when it left the second floor – it was a bit of a dinosaur, the mechanics of it inelegant, clunky and honest. And, there was a trick – because there's always a trick. In this case, when you opened the door of the elevator from the main shrine room side – you were met by the cross-hatched, metal door of the elevator itself. It fastened by a simple latch, which you had to undo, then quickly pull back the metal elevator door, while moving your own body out of the way so the Vajracharaya or the Regent in this case, could exit the elevator.

In the still, tense quiet of the shrine room, suddenly we all heard the elevator motor engage – and listened as the lumbering metal box with it's lineage cargo climbed vertically. I can't remember how long it took – I'm sure any number of people who remember the time and place can, but I'd be surprised if it was more than a :10 journey. But it was the longest and shortest :10 of any kasung's life, because it meant that very shortly you'd be in some way, face to face with a lineage holder. Again, in this case VROT. And that in itself – seeing him – always carried an anticipatory adrenaline shot of energy.

I quickly stood up, heart racing and peered through the very small window on the shrine room door side of the elevator – I saw the cross hatched, accordion like door rise into view. Heard the elevator grind to a stop. I was nervous, but demanded all I could of myself to perform my duty – I opened the shrine room side door fully, reached over, unlatched the metal elevator door, and as I slid it across to the right, looked up to gauge where VROT was, so I could choreograph myself out of the way.

He was a long way away. Further than I'd ever seen him. In fact, I couldn't figure out what was happening. The space inside the elevator was somehow infinite – it had no sides or top, or bottom. And the air molecules seemed very jumpy – they were like tiny points of jumping light – and I could see the Regent in the space, but he was golden. Entirely golden and

radiating. He was a golden, radiant form in an unlimited space that extended in every and no direction.

I stopped. Or was stopped. I had no understanding of what was happening. There was no sound. I could see the Regent and technically he was only 3-4 feet away, but in this new space I'd never seen, he was both right there and miles away. I was somehow in my muffled, stunned silent being, cognizant that I had stopped moving, physically. I had no idea how to start moving again, because I had no concept of my body. But something like a thought said 'You'll have to let him get by...', but it was a thought I couldn't really hear, more like a tiny series of letters in a vast sky that spelled out a meaningless point.

I don't know if I was staring or transfixed, both or neither. I saw the Regent smile? Maybe not smile, but certainly not frown. It was a knowing, but not a formulated thought. He was 24-karat solid golden. And I felt at peace. For someone with no eyes, no ears, no nose, no mouth and no way to get out of his way. But then somehow he was moving past me, fluidly and without hurry. I have no idea how he got past me, or where I was.

A few years later at a small airport in N.H., I had a similar experience with H.E. Jamgon Kongtrul – he walked into the lobby, and was entirely golden. I froze, unable to grasp what was happening. And had H.E. not gently reached over, taken my hand and pulled me along, I'd still be standing in that airport, in 1985, in New Hampshire. I heard Thrangu Rinpoche a few years later, describing how realized beings have a 'radiant complexion'. No idea if that's what I saw. Or felt. I just know if every light beam in the world suddenly turned gold and illuminated your experience with the radiance of its expression – than, that.