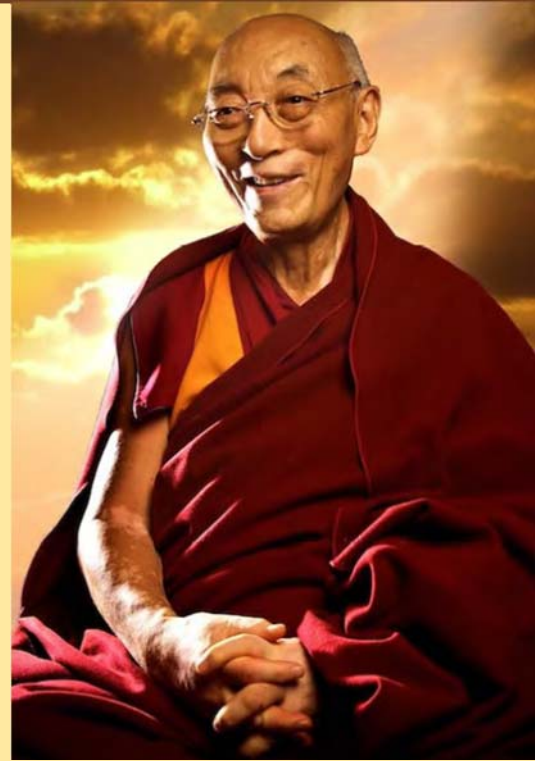




Dear students and friends,

With great sadness, we must convey to you the news of His Eminence Choden Rinpoche's passing into dharmadhatu at 1:30 AM on September 11th, 2015, in his Labrang [house] at Sera Jey Monastery.

As most of you know, last year in July, the glorious protector of the teachings and sentient beings, endowed with great understanding of the five sciences [medicine, craftsmanship, logic, grammar, and the inner science of Buddhism], His Eminence Choden Rinpoche, the supreme Jetsun Losang Gyalten Jigdrel Wangchug, manifested the state of illness from the perspective ordinary disciples. However, through the fortunate convergence of the power of the blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's compassion, the sincere requests of his disciples that Rinpoche may remain long and stable like a vajra, and meticulous medical care, the illness temporarily receded and Rinpoche was able to bestow vast, essential, hard to find teachings on profound sutra and tantra, especially the Manjushri Jamyang Chokhor cycle, to fortunate disciples in the main temple of Sera Jey Monastery.



In recent months, due insufficient merit of us disciples, Rinpoche's illness reached a critical state, each day becoming progressively more severe according the doctor. Concerned by this condition, Rinpoche's close disciples requested His Holiness the Dalai Lama for an observation. Observing ominous signs, His Holiness invited Rinpoche to meet him in Delhi. On August 29th, His Holiness held a relaxed meeting with Rinpoche in his hotel room in Delhi. The following day, Rinpoche comfortably arrived at his home in the great seat of Sera.

From September 4th to 8th, together with senior geshe and tulkus, Rinpoche engaged in the self-initiations of his main tantric deities: Guhyasamaja, Heruka Chakrasamvara, Yamantaka, Cittamani Tara, and Vajrayogini. Disciples observed that Rinpoche performed the recitations precisely without break. During that time, in accordance with the words of the texts, from the state of single-pointed meditation taking the three bodies into the path, Rinpoche also performed the hand mudras without omission or redundancy. On the 8th, having completed well the rituals of self-initiation, Rinpoche showed the aspect of great contentment and gave his final instructions for the future to his disciple Geshe Gyalten. [These instructions included directions for the pujas and prayers to be done after his passing and in the future, advice for the running of Awakening Vajra Centers, and indications regarding his next incarnation.]

Then Rinpoche requested, "Please bring some nice fruit juice and yogurt", and he consumed it. (We

think Rinpoche was acting in accordance with the advice of past masters that for the final meal, a practitioner should take pure white food.) From that point onwards, Rinpoche stopped taking medicine and gross food, staying without break in profound meditation. Several times Rinpoche requested his disciples to make extensive offerings in front of his altar. Then he would ask, "please take me to the altar", and would make prayers in front of the representations of the Three Jewels. Rinpoche spent an especially long time making prayers in front of the statue of the Supreme Arya Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of great compassion.

On the evening of the 10th, Rinpoche sat on his throne in the full vajra posture, and successively displayed his hands in the two teaching mudras [first with the right hand in the teaching mudra and the left hand folded at the lap, and next with both hands in the teaching position.] Finally he lay down in the lion's posture. [These three positions—the two hand mudras and the lion's posture—

are the main postures that disciples of the Buddha are to adopt at the time of death.] Though lamas may display many different postures at the time of death, there is no difference [in the manner of passing away]. Rinpoche calmly advised, "mainly it is important to remember the kindness of the Buddha and abide in that remembrance", and added a verse from Arya Nagarjuna's *Five Stages of Guhyasamaja*:

Whatever a yogi observes,
He should view it as like an illusion.
Similar to a reflection in a mirror,
A dream, a mirage, a water-bubble,
Or a trick of the eye, so should he see it.
[The Buddha] said that is the main [insight].

As he finished speaking, Rinpoche entered a state of meditation. Remaining in that state, at 1:30 AM on September 11th, 2015, in his room in the Labrang, in order to inspire towards the Dharma disciples grasping

at permanence, Rinpoche progressively actualized the three emptinesses and the clear light, finally showing the aspect of dissolving his mind into dharmadhatu.

Although respectful disciples will be left in a sad state on account of this news, we kindly request all concerned organizations, Dharma centers, and individuals to commence continuous recitation of *Chanting the Names of Manjushri* and the three dedication prayers of Guhyasamaja, Heruka, and Yamantaka, as much as possible in accordance with the stages of prayer for the passing of a great lama.

We offer our sincere thanks to all Rinpoche's disciples who, with deep faith and unmovable samaya, offered precise medical care, sponsorship, and heartfelt prayers to Rinpoche from his initial diagnosis until his final passing.

Choden Labrang
Sera Jey Monastery, South India
September 11th, 2015

