

Manis by the millions

By Caroline Crossman

Some eight years ago Lama Zopa Rinpoche had one of his wonderful ideas: he requested that Chenrezig Institute (CI) in Queensland Australia conduct a Chenrezig Retreat on an annual basis, and recite 100,000,000 million mani mantras, as was the age-old tradition of Tibet. It seemed absolutely perfect that this “mani retreat” should be the annual endeavor of Chenrezig Institute.

With enthusiasm – and the blessings of Rinpoche’s presence – the first retreat at CI was very strong, with sangha and lay people participating. But after twelve weeks of formal retreat and only twenty-five million mantras recited it became obvious that some other approach would be necessary if the community was to fulfil Rinpoche’s wishes.

It was decided to adapt the retreat to our busy Western lifestyles and time constraints, and doing it from our home cushions would definitely help to achieve the goal. Rinpoche gave permission for “home retreaters,” and created a short and sweet sadhana for the practice. The retreat would still continue as a formal retreat at the center, and the home retreat concept could then include people from the Dharma community who wanted to be involved, but who otherwise could not physically be there.

The help of many was enlisted from FPMT centers and individuals alike, worldwide. Also clear was that the home retreat was going to take quite some time to accumulate the required number of mantras. An auspicious day was selected to start (usually in November of each year) and an auspicious finishing date affirmed as Saka Dawa (May or June) or 100,000,000 million mantras (whichever came first). Thus was born the Home Mani Retreat and this is the schedule that it still follows. This year’s retreat ends on June 18.

Although allowing a recess before the next retreat starts permits a “space” from the retreat, some are so endeared to the practice that they continue it on a daily basis throughout the year. In between, they record the manis and offer them at the beginning of the next retreat, and so are contributing to the next retreat count. An email reminder is sent out at the end of each month to participants who have pledged manis (or joined in), requesting they submit their count in malas.



Information on the retreat is found on the CI website www.chenrezig.com.au where it is possible to submit a pledge form or simply join in. A short practice is emailed to the participant, meaning that there is an opportunity for anyone to join the retreat at any time. If you would like to participate in this year’s Home Mani Retreat,

please email carolinecrossman@gmail.com. There may be questions arising when doing the retreat and these are addressed on an individual basis via the same address.

Over the past seven years the manis recited have totalled over 400 million. Of these manis recited, over 80 percent of them have been contributed by the home retreaters. This may appear to be a disappointing result and well short of our intended goal but I think that this is actually quite amazing! What is abundantly clear is that people from all over the world want to utilise this opportunity to *develop the compassionate good heart*. Emails come from sangha, Dharma centres, old students, new students and prisoners. In my role as “book-keeper” I am delighted and grateful every time I am able to record that even *one* mala has been recited, bringing us closer to fulfilling Rinpoche’s wishes, and I sincerely thank everyone who has contributed over the years.

Over time I have come to understand that the purpose of the retreat is not the number of manis recited. It is the development of compassion with persistence, determination, effort and dedication – best expressed in these words:

“The prime mover of every human action is the motivation or the determination. First, our motivation should be simple and sincere. Whether we achieve the goal or not does not matter so long as our motivation is very sincere and we make an attempt. Finally, even if we fail to achieve our goal, we won’t regret making the effort” – Universal Responsibility and the Inner Environment: His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

And in the words of Rinpoche, “Everyone is most welcome to join in the Mani Retreat.” ☸

Caroline Crossman is an invited Elder of Chenrezig Institute, mother of Darcey, businesswoman, and co-ordinator of the Home Mani Retreat for seven consecutive years in a voluntary capacity.