

From Anne C. Klein, Ph.D, Lama Rigzin Drolma

I write in support of the activities of Tara Mandala and Lama Tsultrim Allione who founded this International Buddhist Center in 1993 with her late husband Mr. David Petit. During the late 70's and 80's we crossed paths occasionally at various Tibetan Buddhist teachings in the US. During those years I was getting an M.A. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin. Then I spent time studying with master Tibetan scholar-practitioners in India as part of getting a PhD in Tibetan Buddhism from University of Virginia. Following that graduation, I held a post-doc in the Women's Studies in Religion program at Harvard Divinity School and then taught at Stanford for five years before coming to Rice, where I have been teaching courses in Buddhism and Tibetan language since 1989. In 1996 I co-founded Dawn Mountain in Houston with Dr. Harvey Aronson. This is the background from which I express my heartfelt appreciation for Tsultrim as a person, dharma teacher, and visionary founder Tara Mandala.

Prior to Tara Mandala, I knew Tsultrim as a dedicated student, deep practitioner and beginning to teach. Later I met David and witnessed his tireless work toward their shared vision of Tara Mandala. Most of that vision is now realized.

I visited Tara Mandala in the mid-90's when there was only a single yurt on the land. As a Board Member during this period I saw first hand the meticulous care with which plans moved forward year by year. First the yurt, then, slowly, a stupa of stones from the land. Some land was cleared for tents, cars, a second yurt, then a road to the top of the land, then three-year retreat huts. Summer students camped in tents, an outdoor kitchen served wonderful food. Finally, in about 2008, a real kitchen, dining area, comfortable dormitory, and the crowning jewel of an artful, innovative and inspiring Tara Temple designed by Lama Tsultrim. All this under Lama Tsultrim's careful guidance and sprung from her vision.

I was close enough to the activities to recognize just how much ongoing effort, skill, and courage it took to conceive and carry out such a vision. During those years, with David's help, Tsultrim was still raising her three children—all now well grown with families of their own. She was also developing her dharma teaching and dedicating herself with unwavering passion to nourishing women students in their lives and practice, and training women as well as male teachers. She also published her well received *Women of Wisdom*.

This summer, 2025, I visited Tara Mandala after ten or more years absence. I was deeply moved to see how much had matured. The curriculum is rich, varied and well presented by seasoned Tibetan and Western teachers. There was harmony and a felt sense of kindness from the hard-working staff, who are clearly well trained and well managed. Also, thanks to new staff positions there are persons trained to ensure protocols of safety and to respond with support for practitioners as need arises. Tara Mandala's safe sangha codes strengthens that safety. Short and long-term students alike benefit incalculably from the sacred place that Tara Mandala has become through Lama Tsultrim Allione's creative integrity as a practitioner, teacher, and far-sighted administrator. Her watchful eye has been key in ensuring the high quality of all described above. Tara Mandala is already a vibrant gift for present and future dharma practitioners and Lama Tsultrim, along with teachers and staff working with her, is deeply committed to improving it even further.

May it be so.



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