



The NYEMA Sun

NYEMA Projects' semi-annual newsletter on humanitarian projects in eastern Tibet

Twenty Years of Progress in Nangchen, Eastern Tibet

Dear friends:

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of Lama Norlha Rinpoche's first visit back to his native region of Nangchen, eastern Tibet, in 1984. On his return to the U.S., he was determined to take strong action to reverse the heartbreaking losses of the preceding decades and to improve living standards and opportunities for the people of the region.

In 1997, with the help of Dr. Pema Dorje, Lama Norlha Rinpoche founded NYEMA to work toward these goals through four specific initiatives: to build schools; to begin to provide medical care; to rebuild Korche Monastery, where Rinpoche had received his own training; and to build a monastery for nuns at the holy site of Kala Rongo, fulfilling a wish expressed by His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa and by Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche.

Over the past 20 years, amazing progress has been made. Last summer, Lama Norlha Rinpoche again visited Nangchen. This issue of *The NYEMA Sun* describes the latest developments in each of the four NYEMA initiatives, along with the next stage of Rinpoche's vision for continuing to help.

Of course, NYEMA's achievements have depended on the generosity of many benefactors. The people of Nangchen have very few material resources of their own; but what they lack in wealth, they more than make up for in hard work, determination, and gratitude.

Our thanks to everyone who has participated in the success of these projects to date. The text and photos to follow are evidence of your efforts.

Best wishes,

Linda Jordan
Editor



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In This Issue:

Letter from the Editor	1
Monastic Initiative:	
Kala Rongo	2
Korche Monastery	5
Education Initiative	8
Medical Initiative	9
Community Initiative	9
Donation Form	10

If you would like to be notified via email of future newsletters—as well as important new developments in Nangchen—we cordially invite you to join our mailing list. Sign up on our website at www.nyema.org!

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Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Gön

Kala Rongo Suffers a Setback, and Inaugurates a New Retreat

Help Needed to Rebuild Kala Rongo Shrine Hall

As we reported on the NYEMA website shortly after its occurrence, a fire consumed the shrine hall of Kala Rongo Monastery on October 25, 2004, just weeks after Lama Norlha Rinpoche's visit. Fortunately, there were no injuries, and no other buildings were damaged.

But the fire, which left the building a total ruin, took with it several years of hard work, much of it carried out by the Kala Rongo nuns with their own hands. In addition to the building itself, which served as the assembly and practice hall for more than 300 nuns, many precious statues, paintings, decorations and ritual implements were also lost in the flames.

Shedra doubling as temporary shrine hall

Pending reconstruction of the shrine hall, the shedra (monastic college) is also serving as the temporary main monastery. Shedra classes are still underway, but its main shrine room will be shared by the whole monastery for the next one or two years, until rebuilding is complete.

The monastery at Kala Rongo is one of the jewels in NYEMA's network of charitable projects, and an important step in Lama Norlha Rinpoche's long-term work to preserve the religion and culture of the region, and to equalize opportunities for women in Tibet. We will keep you informed about the situation, with updates as they are available.

Lama Norlha Rinpoche has sent money to help provide food, necessities and emergency supplies. In the meantime, funds for rebuilding the shrine hall are urgently needed, and any help you can provide is deeply appreciated. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law. Please see the Donation Form on page 10.



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Nyungne Practice Continues at the Main Monastery



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The nuns at Kala Rongo continue to take turns doing the nyungne practice, the two-day practice of Thousand-Arm Chenrezi. Since 1996, they have performed this practice continuously without a break.

This practice brings great benefit to all beings throughout the world, and anyone may participate by helping with the financial support that makes it possible. Please see the Donation Form on page 10.

Photos:

Top right: Lama Norlha Rinpoche in Kala Rongo's shrine hall during his visit in September

Middle right: Kala Rongo's shrine hall prior to the devastating fire in October

Bottom left: Nuns of Kala Rongo



Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Gön

Fifth retreat cycle begins in newly completed building

The new three-year retreat facility at Kala Rongo was nearly finished when Lama Norlha Rinpoche visited last summer.



Construction was completed soon after, and the fifth retreat cycle was initiated in the new retreat house in November on the Buddhist holy day of Lhabap Duchen, with 45 nuns entering retreat.



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More spacious than the previous retreat building, the new one has 45 rooms for resident nuns. In addition to the living quarters, the new facility also contains a shrine room, a kitchen and a storage room.

Four nuns, who spent six to nine years in retreat in the old facility, have moved into the new building as caretakers. The old building will be used to accommodate short retreats during most of the year.

Meanwhile, Lama Norlha Rinpoche's vision for Kala Rongo continues to expand: new land has been donated to him near the shedra, and he has designated it as a possible site for future Chogyur Lingpa and Shangpa retreats.

Kala Rongo Shedra Hosts Public Seminar

The shedra shrine room still needs finishing work, but classes at the monastic college are in session and going well.

When Lama Norha Rinpoche visited, Khenpo Tsepa Dorje was giving a 100-day public seminar on the *Kun-zang La-may Zhal-lung*, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, by Patrul Rinpoche. Seminar sessions were scheduled daily from morning until 1:00 p.m.

In addition to his teaching schedule, Khenpo Tsepa Dorje is active in making shedra improvements.



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Photos:

Top right: Construction at Kala Rongo retreat center

Top left: Nuns do construction work during break from studies

Bottom right: View of Kala Rongo shedra and stupa

Bottom left: Teachers and students of Kala Rongo shedra

Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Gön

Photo Gallery: A Glimpse of Life at Kala Rongo Monastery



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Top and middle left: Procession greeting the arrival of Lama Norlha Rinpoche during his visit in summer 2004

Bottom left: Nuns prepare for a trip into town

Top right: Chanting inside the shedra

Middle right: Nuns watching video

Kala Rongo Stupa



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The nuns of Kala Rongo wish to extend their thanks to Ocean of Merit, sponsor of the first stupa at Kala Rongo Monastery.



Monastic Initiative: Korche Monastery

Korche's Monks Grateful for Steady Improvements

Shedra building renovation is complete

As we reported in the previous edition of *The NYEMA Sun*, major renovations to the shedra (monastic college) building were needed, and began last spring. The work was carried out by Chinese construction workers under the supervision of Sonam Chopel, assisted by Lama Jamdo.



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The original construction, begun in 1998, was done by enthusiastic but inexperienced volunteers, and consequently, the resulting structure did not prove stable over time. Cracks developed in a number of walls, one wall in the Khenpo's room began to collapse, and the back of the building shifted off the foundation. The monks continued to use the shedra building despite its hazardous condition, resulting in an urgent need for repairs.

The renovations were completed this fall, including a new foundation and the addition of concrete support beams to the walls. The monks of Korche Shedra are very happy to have a strong, stable and safe building.



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Photos:

Top left: Crack in Korche shedra wall

Bottom left: Shedra's new wall

Top right: Khenpo Tenrab's new quarters under construction

Middle right: Repair work on back wall of shedra

Bottom right: New roof construction begins



Monastic Initiative: Korche Monastery



Water and Bridges

In a major improvement in the standard of living for residents of Korche Monastery, water faucets can now be found throughout the grounds. These faucets provide a generous, continuous, high-pressure supply of fresh spring water. The monks of Korche Monastery again wish to thank the Gracious Glory Buddhism Foundation and Water for Humanity for funding this project.

In addition, the guest house for Lamas now has two bathrooms: a private one for Rinpoche and another for guests. Each bathroom is outfitted with a tub, shower, sink and toilet. Hot water is readily available, thanks to solar power.

In other water-related news, five small bridges have now been completed on the road to Korche, so the monks no longer have to ford the local streams in cars.

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Photos:

Top left: Water faucet funded by Gracious Glory Buddhism Foundation

Middle left: Hot water tank and solar panel

Middle right: New bathroom with hot running water

Bottom left and right: Two of the five new bridges

Monastic Initiative: Korche Monastery



Korche Monastery's Rinpoches

Left: Garchen Tulku has finished the three-year retreat. Following Korche custom, he will now spend five years studying at Palpung Monastery's shedra.

Right: Ngawang Tulku has finished the three-year retreat, and oversees the Lama Gyupa, the organization of monks at Korche who have completed the three-year retreat.



Photos ©2004 NYEMA Projects

Korche stupas



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Near Korche, a large stupa that had been destroyed has been rebuilt, thanks to the sponsorship of Lama Norlha Rinpoche. For one month each year, all the Korche monks go to the stupa to do meditation practice and ceremonies. "This results in so much blessing for the area and the entire country," Lama Norlha Rinpoche affirmed.

The monks of Korche also wish to extend their thanks to Jeffrey Wu, sponsor of the 60-foot-high Guru Rinpoche stupa at Korche Monastery (pictured above).

Letter from Lama Youngdrung

Dear friends at NYEMA,

As I write this, Lama Norlha Rinpoche is here visiting Korche Monastery. I am writing to tell you how happy all of us are to see him, and how grateful we are for having such an excellent place to study and practice the teachings of the Buddha.

Before Lama Norlha Rinpoche first came in 1984, Korche Monastery was very poor, with only a small building for a temple. Now, thanks to his efforts and the generosity of our many benefactors in the West, we have much better buildings and we are also very fortunate to have a shedra for continued study.

We would like to extend our thanks to all of you.

Lama Youngdrung
August 2004

Schools Thrive Amid Challenging Conditions

Korche School

Korche school currently has three teachers: Odu, Katra, and Karma Gelek. Katra transferred from Yonten Gatsal Ling School in January 2004. Math and Tibetan language are currently being taught. Chinese language classes are on hiatus since the teacher recently moved to Sharnda. Lama Norlha Rinpoche is asking the local government to supply books and a replacement teacher for Chinese. An English language teacher is also being sought. The school has three cooks: Tenyi, Tsering Chodrak and Kartsi. They rotate the job, each working four months of the year.

During the 10-month school term, each student receives a small stipend in the amount of 20 yuan to help with expenses.

Students overcome challenges to pursue education

Due to the harsh winters, schools must be closed for two months each year, since there is no system of transportation and the children cannot cover the long distances on foot in the extreme cold and snow. In addition, in this sparsely populated region inhabited by nomads and farmers, it is often difficult for students to attend school full time, as they are also needed at home for seasonal work. Despite these obstacles, the students at Korche School are all doing their best to apply themselves to their education, while also fulfilling their responsibilities to their families. After completing three to four years of study at Korche, students may continue their education either at Korche or Kala Rongo monastery or in public school in Sharnda.



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Kala Rongo School

110 students are receiving an education at the two-room school house next to the KR shedra. The children, most of whom are orphaned or from needy families, sleep in the classrooms. Tibetan and Chinese language classes are taught, and English classes are planned for the future. There are two cooks and five teachers.

Yonten Gatsal Ling

When Yonten Gatsal Ling school was established, the local authorities agreed to take over its operation in five years. They have fulfilled their end of the agreement, and the school is now fully run by the government.

Satellite Schools

While numerous families are moving to the city at Sharnda in search of better opportunities, there remain many children who still have no access to schools. NYEMA continues to operate one-room satellite schools in more remote areas, in order to provide these nomadic children with basic reading and writing skills.

Photos:

Top right: Reading practice at Korche School

Bottom right: Lama Norlha Rinpoche rewarding students with candy at Yonten Gatsal Ling



Medical and Community Initiatives

Kala Rongo Medical Clinic: A Work in Progress

Progress on the medical clinic and school at Kala Rongo continues, with seven students at present and the clinic open part time.



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There are four rooms, two upstairs and two downstairs. In one upstairs room, patients are examined and medicine is stored. The second room is currently under construction, and cabinets are being installed.



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In the hallway outside the supply/examination room, there are two beds. Dr. Guru Tsering and his assistant, Lama Tenpal, sleep there. These beds are also used to provide a resting place for sick patients.

Downstairs is a canteen, a small store where nuns from the monastery can buy basic supplies. Next to the canteen is a dispensary where patients receive their medications.

Photo Gallery: Village Stupa in Sharnda



Throughout the day, villagers take time to circumambulate the stupa.



Prayer flags and stones carved with the Mani mantra adorn the stupa site.

The villagers of Sharnda wish to extend their thanks to Gracious Glory Buddhism Foundation for sponsoring the stupa.

Photos ©2004 NYEMA Projects

Photos:

Top right: Kala Rongo Clinic's doctors, Guru Tsering and Lama Tenpal, behind the clinic

Top left: Medical supplies in the storeroom

NYEMA Projects, Inc. Donation Form

Through investing financial resources, educational or medical supplies, time or skills, you can help the people of Nangchen improve their standard of living and protect their unique cultural heritage. Less than 5% of funding provided by our donors goes to administrative overhead. On behalf of the people of Nangchen, we thank you for your interest in these initiatives

I would like to contribute to the following:

- ☐ NYEMA Projects (general) \$ _____
☐ Monastic Initiative (general) \$ _____
☐ Kala Rongo Monastery \$ _____
☐ Kala Rongo Three-year Retreat \$ _____
☐ Kala Rongo Shedra (college) \$ _____
☐ Korché Monastery \$ _____
☐ Korché Shedra (college) \$ _____
☐ Korché Three-year Retreats \$ _____
☐ Damkar Monastery \$ _____
☐ Samten Ling \$ _____

- ☐ Education Initiative (general) \$ _____
☐ Yongten Gatsal Ling \$ _____
☐ Satellite Schools \$ _____
☐ Korché School \$ _____
☐ Kala Rongo Children's School \$ _____
☐ Medical Initiative (general) \$ _____
☐ KR Shrine Hall Emergency Fund \$ _____
☐ Community Initiative (general) \$ _____
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☐ Sponsor stupa at Korché Monastery \$200

Sponsor Nyunge practice at Kala Rongo:

☐ \$300 for 100 ☐ \$1,500 for 500 ☐ \$3,000 for 1,000

Sponsor food at: ☐ Kala Rongo ☐ Korché

Select the meal(s) by circling the amount(s).

	Regular day	Chanting day
Breakfast	\$30	\$50
Lunch	\$100	\$120
Dinner	\$30	\$50
All 3 meals	\$160	\$220
Tea	\$20	\$20

Total donation: \$ _____

Special Instructions (if any) _____

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