



# The NYEMA Sun

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

## Losar Tashi Delek and Welcome to the Year of the Monkey!

Dear Friends:

The Tibetan New Year, or Losar, arrives on a different date each year because it is determined by the lunar calendar. This year the traditional three-day New Year's celebration fell on February 21st through 23rd. It is a time of celebration and festivities, family reunions, and for many Tibetans, pilgrimage.

Losar Tashi Delek means, "May the New Year be auspicious and happy." The phrase carries particular significance this year because with this Losar, Tibetans everywhere are welcoming the Year of the Monkey, which is considered very auspicious indeed. Tibetan astrology follows a twelve-year cycle, so the Year of the Monkey occurs less than once a decade.

In Nangchen, the Year of the Monkey is felt to be an opportunity for profound religious activity. People will take more frequent pilgrimages than usual this year, say more mantras, and make more prayers at sacred places. At NYEMA, we see the Year of the Monkey as an opportunity to help the people of Nangchen to renew their connection to their cultural heritage. We will work hard this year to support Kala Rongo's new library, to teach as many children as possible to read their native language, and to help the monks of Korche repair their monastic college so that they can continue their traditional course of study in a safe environment.

To all those who have contributed to this effort, Losar Tashi Delek – and once again, thank you!

With warm wishes,

Alexandra Strelka  
Editor



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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](http://www.nyema.org)!

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## *Kala Rongo Clinic: Emergency Funds Needed! See page 5.*



# Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Göñ

## Kala Rongo Emerges as a New Cultural Mecca

### Three-Year Retreat Program to Expand

Kala Rongo's abbot, Khenpo Tsepa Dorje, would like to build two new three-year retreat facilities to house 20 to 25 retreatants each. One new retreat will be built on the site where Chogyur Dechen Lingpa, a renowned 19th-century meditation master who lived and practiced in the region surrounding the monastery, is said to have revealed previously hidden teachings. The program of instruction there will focus on these teachings.

The second new retreat will be dedicated to practices of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage, which was founded by Khyunpo Naljor in the 11th century. Nuns who have already completed the Kagyu three-year retreat program will have the option of entering one of these two programs to continue and deepen their meditation training. The projected cost of building the new facilities is \$20,000 each.

The Kagyu three-year retreat facility is being moved to a site closer to the monastic college, away from the mountainside. It will have 40 individual rooms, a shrine hall, a kitchen, and bathrooms. This is a great improvement over the old facility, where nuns had to share very small rooms. The foundation is in place; building will commence in the spring when weather permits. Check back for updates on construction progress in the fall newsletter. Building costs are estimated at \$40,000.

### Year of the Monkey

Every twelfth year, in the Year of the Monkey, special celebrations are held at sacred sites throughout Tibet. Because a famous eighth-century Buddhist master, Guru Rinpoche, meditated in retreat for one year at Kala Rongo, it is considered to be a very special and sacred place indeed. Many lamas will come to Kala Rongo this year to bestow blessings and perform ceremonies, and literally thousands of Buddhist practitioners will pass through Kala Rongo this year to pay their respects and circumambulate the sacred mountain where Guru Rinpoche sat in meditation.

### A Monastic Center of Growing Importance

Kala Rongo recently hosted a six-week long series of Buddhist initiations and teachings given by a well-known teacher from Karma Chamey Rinpoche's monastery, which is near Kala Rongo. This cycle of teachings, which ended on February 7th, served as an intense time of practice for 500 nuns, monks, and lay practitioners. On the final day, 15,000 local people attended a dawn-to-dusk initiation ceremony.



### Library Project Well Underway

Texts and furnishings are being purchased for the new library in Kala Rongo's monastic college. Building a comprehensive library takes time, and certain texts are difficult to procure, especially in rural Nangchen. Updates will be posted as they become available.

### New Lama Residence to be Constructed

Abbot Khenpo Tsepa Dorje currently lives within the nuns' monastic college. Because it is not the Tibetan custom for monks and nuns to share the same quarters, a new lama residence will be built on a hill overlooking Kala Rongo to house Khenpo Tsepa Dorje, two other male Khenpos who teach at Kala Rongo, and their monk attendants. The Khenpos will walk to the monastic college and monastery during the day and return home each evening. Additional rooms will be built in the same housing complex for visiting monks to do private retreats. The projected cost is \$30,000.



# Monastic Initiative: Korche Monastery

## News from Korche

### Korche Monastery Making Repairs

The building housing Korche's monastic college has begun to slide off its foundation (please see Fall 2003 issue of *The Nyema Sun* for details). Structural repairs will commence in the spring. The projected cost of the repair is \$15,000.

The road to Korche is difficult even by Tibetan standards, which means that at times it is impassible to even the sturdiest of all-terrain vehicles. The situation is worsened considerably by intersections with streams and rivers. Korche Monastery has assumed the responsibility of building twenty bridges of varying sizes to negotiate these waterways. The local population will continue to be responsible for general road maintenance. The cost of the bridges is estimated at \$25,000.

### New Three-Year Retreat Under Way

Korche's seventh retreat was completed at the lower retreat facility on November 16, 2003. The eighth retreat commenced about three months ago. There are 19 monks enrolled in this rigorous program of meditation practice, including two *tulkus* (incarnate lamas).

### Photo Gallery: Three-year Retreat Graduation Ceremony



*Above: Tibetan ritual dance performed as part of Korche's retreat graduation ceremony.*



*Top right: Students of Korche's monastic college demonstrate debate during the retreat graduation festivities.*



*Bottom right: Traditional mandala offering performed to honor the teachers of the retreatants, as well as all the generations of teachers who preceded them.*

Photos ©2004 NYEMA Projects



## Photo Gallery: Happenings In and Around Korche Monastery

*Top right: Water gushes from a pipe that now carries fresh water to Korche Monastery, as resident lamas look on. Running water has reduced the monks' workload and has also improved their health, as their previous water source had a very high saline content.*



*Bottom left: Hundreds of monks and local residents attend an initiation ceremony at Korche Monastery. Initiations like this one serve as transmissions of Buddhist practices from teacher to disciple. Tibetans, however, consider it a blessing to be present at an initiation ceremony even if they do not intend to engage in the practice being transmitted.*

*Bottom right: The Kagyu Monlam celebration was held in nearby Sharnda this past November, with 7,000 monks in attendance. This annual event focuses on the chanting of aspiration prayers for universal wisdom and happiness. Here offerings are being made on behalf of Kagyu Thubten Choling, Lama Norlha's monastery in upstate New York.*



Photos ©2004 NYEMA Projects



## Monastic Initiative: Korche Monastery



### New Stupas Adorning Korche

A stupa is a spiritual monument traditionally believed to benefit a region and its inhabitants. Sixty small stupas have been built at Korche Monastery, sponsored by Lamas and local residents. Korche would like to build a total of 108 (a number significant in monastic tradition and meditation practice), but the monastery has run out of funds. This would be a direct opportunity for a Western sponsor to help preserve the culture of the region. Each stupa costs \$200 to build. Please see the Donation Form on page 6 if you are interested in helping with this project.

## Medical Initiative

### Improving the Health of Nangchen's Residents While Preserving Traditional Tibetan Medical Practices

#### Medical Clinic and Women's Medical School at Kala Rongo to Expand

The Kala Rongo medical clinic is beginning to benefit the entire surrounding region. Those who can afford to pay are charged for services as a means to support the clinic; those who are too poor receive services free of charge. We would eventually like to expand the clinic to include space for overnight stays in the event that patients are too ill to return home immediately. Currently patients who cannot return home on the day of their clinic visit are sleeping at the monastery, which makes it difficult for the clinic staff to attend to them when necessary. We would therefore like to add rooms with hospital beds for overnight patients. The projected cost of this clinic addition is \$15,000.

In the future, we hope to construct new buildings, which will allow us to add more medical practitioners and teachers to the staff. In our current plan, one building will consist of a reception area, a classroom, and a treatment room. The second building will house a room for growing medical herbs and another room for preparing finished medicines from them; and the third building will house a doctors' residence, complete with sleeping quarters and a kitchen.

#### *Report Just in from Kala Rongo Clinic*

#### Emergency Funds Needed!

Immediate funds are needed to purchase medicine and for basic operating expenses. Families are suffering hardships throughout the region due to last year's hailstorm, which destroyed much of their crop. As a result, many of the clinic's current patients do not have the money to pay for services. Furthermore, families of the medical students have lost the means to support them. The eight women studying medicine at the clinic are now in need of financial support to help them buy staples.

Furthermore, the clinic is struggling with staffing issues. The clinic needs a third doctor to see patients and to help with teaching. There is a candidate for this role who has a great deal of teaching experience. His salary would be approximately 1,500 yuan (\$185) a month. Funds are needed for his relocation expenses and for his salary.



# Education and Community Initiatives

## Classes Well Established, Dormitories Needed

### Children's School at Kala Rongo Taking Shape

Two classrooms have been built to accommodate the children of Kala Rongo's new school, who were previously attending class within the monastic college. The next phase of this project constitutes the construction of boys' and girls' dormitories. Presently the boys are sleeping on the floor in the library above the monastic college shrine room, while the girls are sleeping on the floor in a common room above the main monastery's shrine room. The new dormitories will be built next to the classrooms, which are located between the monastic college and one of Kala Rongo's two stupas. The projected cost of building the two dormitories is \$10,000 each.

The children are being taught by two assistant Khenpos who help Khenpo Tsepa Dorje teach the program at Kala Rongo's monastic college. A laywoman gives them Chinese and Tibetan language classes, and a nun instructs them in Tibetan language.

### Update from Korche School and Satellite Schools

Classes resumed following the winter break for the Losar holiday (Tibetan New Year). There are three full-time teachers on staff at Korche, as well as a full-time cook. The Tibetan language teacher formerly taught at Yonten Gatsaling. Korche's students also receive instruction in Chinese language and mathematics. We still hope to build dormitories for students who live too far from the school to walk there each day.

There are currently 35 active satellite schools that meet for five to six-month sessions.

## Photo Gallery: Village Stupa Consecration



*Ceremony blessing the traditional religious objects to be placed inside the Village Stupa.*

Photos ©2004 NYEMA Projects



*Consecration ceremony for the Village Stupa with procession of monks from Korche Monastery.*



*Korche Monastery's Khenpo Tenrab fills a Buddha statue with prayers for the Village Stupa.*



## 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) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Water Project \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Senior Housing \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Solar Power Project \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ 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) \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment Options (Please print clearly to ensure proper handling.)

- ☐ Check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

- ☐ Charge US \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my credit card: ☐ Visa ☐ MC

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Important note:** For your protection, please **do not** e-mail your credit card number. You may send this form by mail, or fax to (845) 297-5761. Charges must be sent to NYEMA Projects in Wappingers Falls, New York.

### In Hong Kong only\*:

Payable to **NYEMA (Hong Kong) Association Limited** and send to:

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 Bough & Co. Solicitors  
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 173 Des Voeux Rd.  
 Central, Hong Kong

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