



The NYEMA Sun

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

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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!](#)

Photos:

Top: Nun from Kala Rongo Monastery ©2002 Yakov Platt
Bottom: Aerial view of Korche Monastery ©2002 Yakov Platt



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Monastic Initiative: Kala Rongo Palchen Gön

Kala Rongo: The Monastery Matures

Kala Rongo has been a thriving practice place for nuns for over ten years. The recent addition of the shedra, or monastic college, has made it a fully equipped monastery that now offers women the unprecedented opportunity to engage in all aspects of practice and study available within the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. (Please see the [Spring 2002](#) issue of the *NYEMA Sun* for details about the Kala Rongo shedra). The shrine room in the shedra now has a new floor, and the entire college is completely furnished. All nuns' rooms in the shedra have recently been equipped with wooden meditation boxes, the traditional and preferred seats used for study and meditation practice. The second class of nuns will be entering the shedra in December, 2002.



In the past six months, NYEMA has been able to fund further improvements to the shedra as well as to the main monastery and the retreat house. A copper roof similar to the one at Korche Monastery, complete with the traditional goldleaved ornaments, is being installed on the main monastery building. To further support the nuns' health and comfort in the coming winter months, NYEMA has purchased three new stoves that burn wood and yak dung.



To cut down on the nuns' secular workload, we are responding to their request for clean running water. Currently a great deal of time and effort must be expended in order to carry water from an external source to the main monastery, shedra, and retreat facility. Materials for a water project similar to the one at Korche have been purchased for Kala Rongo.

A second stupa at Kala Rongo is nearing completion. It contains a prayer wheel filled with one hundred million each of Dorje Sempa, Amitabha, Chenrezig, and Guru Rinpoche mantras. Both the retreat facility and the shedra at Kala Rongo have received solar panels and generators this year, and the nuns are thrilled by the improvement in lighting.

Yaks Saved

A hundred and fifty male and female yaks have been saved from being slaughtered for meat by generous NYEMA sponsors. They are now living at Kala Rongo and are cared for by the nuns there, who in turn benefit from the milk and cheese the yak cows produce.



Photos:

Top right: Nuns in Kala Rongo's shrine room ©2002 Yakov Platt

Middle left: New stupa at Kala Rongo ©2002 Nyema Projects, Inc.

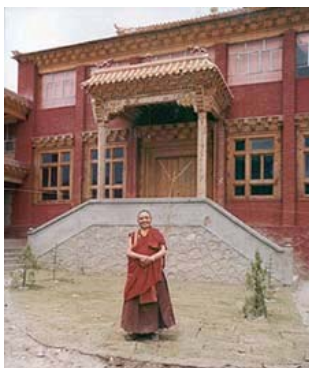
Bottom right: Kala Rongo retreat nuns with new solar panel ©2002 Nyema Projects, Inc.



Ongoing Improvements at Korche Monastery

The Shedra

Korche Monastery, the site of Lama Norlha Rinpoche's early training, has received NYEMA funding for a number of facilities improvements during the past year. The shedra (monastic college) now houses five new rooms for teachers, and Sabka Rinpoche has a new suite there, complete with a bathroom. The shedra's shrine room, which was previously rather sparse, has received new furnishings and sacred paintings. The shedra monks, who are in their sixth year of study, are feeling more and more at home with each successive improvement. NYEMA has also recently been able to provide funding to increase the monthly stipends with which they purchase their notebooks and personal care items.



Korche Stupa

The Korche stupa is now completely finished and contains a room-size prayer wheel filled with 100 million mantras of the Buddha Akshobya. It is the daily spiritual practice of many Tibetans to turn prayer wheels, meditating that the blessings of the mantras emanate for the benefit of all beings.

Korche Water Project

The foundations for bringing water to Korche have been laid: trenches have been dug and most of the piping to carry water down the mountain from Tang Go Nan spring has been installed. The main monastery and both retreat houses look forward to receiving fresh running water. Funding for NYEMA's water projects has been provided in part by a grant from Water from Humanity, a committee within the American Society of Dowsers. Please see our [Spring 2002](#) Newsletter for a full description of NYEMA's community water project, which will bring running water to Korche Village and Korche School as well as to Korche Monastery.



Korche Retreat

The practitioners in both of Korche's drupkangs (retreat houses) are doing extremely well. The twelve monks in Korche's upper drupkang finished their three-year retreat in September. The upper retreat house, which is aging and beginning to show signs of structural damage, will now remain vacant until it can be completely rebuilt. NYEMA is trying to fund this project as quickly as possible in order to allow the next retreat cycle to commence with a minimal delay.



Solar Power comes to Korche

Funding from NYEMA has made it possible to purchase solar panels for the main monastery, the shedra, and both retreat houses, as well as for Lama Gyupa, the organization of monks that maintains the monastery's daily chanting practices. The Korche monks, who are experiencing the benefits of electric energy for the first time, can hardly believe the difference electric lighting makes in reducing the eyestrain associated with countless hours of reading by candle light.

Photos:
Top right: Monks of Korche Shedra ©2002 Yakov Platt
Top left: Khenpo Tenrab at Korche Shedra ©2002 Yakov Platt
Middle right: Site of Korche water channel ©2002 Nyema Projects, Inc.
Bottom left: New solar panel at Korche Monastery Nyema Projects, Inc.



Improvements at Korche School

Korche School, which serves the children of Korche Village, has nearly doubled in size since it was first built. There are now sixty day students who learn Tibetan and Chinese language and mathematics there. In order to accommodate this number of students, the school building has been expanded to include three new classrooms, two new teachers' rooms, and a kitchen. There is also a new stove that burns wood and yak dung for heat during Nangchen's harsh winters, and a wall has been constructed around the schoolyard to ensure the children's safety.



We would eventually like to expand Korche to include dormitory space for students who live too far away to walk to school, as well as a dining room and library.

In the past few months, Korche has seen some improvements unprecedented in Nangchen's schools: a solar panel and generator that powers a television and VCR on which the children watch educational videos. The children's fascination with this unfamiliar technology has made it a powerful learning tool.

We would like to thank [Trace Foundation](#) for its continuing support of our education projects in Nangchen.

Photo: Korche School ©2002 Nyema Projects, Inc.



Clinic and Medical School Nearing Completion

The clinic and women's medical school at Kala Rongo featured in our [Spring 2002](#) newsletter is nearing completion. The clinic building has two stories with three rooms each. Downstairs are the patient examination room, classroom, and herbal pharmacy; the upstairs rooms will serve as the doctors' residences and kitchen. The building will also have a covered porch that will be used to dry freshly mixed herbal medicines.

The clinic will initially be staffed by Dr. Guru Tsering, a widely respected practitioner of traditional Tibetan and Chinese medicine who is fully licensed in both fields, and his assistant, Lama Tenpal, a Korche monk who is also licensed to practice both Tibetan and Chinese medicine. Dr. Tsering and Lama Tenpal will train eight nuns from Kala Rongo and three lay women from the community over the course of a six-year program. Some of these women doctors will then continue to staff the clinic, which will serve the nuns of Kala Rongo as well as the women in the surrounding region, while others will practice in neighboring towns in order to bring affordable and acceptable health care to more of Nangchen's women, who for cultural reasons are often reluctant to be examined by a male physician. We hope eventually to be able to provide the clinic with a mechanized system for manufacturing herbal medicines, which would allow Dr. Tsering and Lama Tenpal to spend more time teaching and seeing patients and less time keeping their pharmacy stocked. Because there is an enormous increase in the volume of medicines that can be made using modern machinery, providing these machines will also allow the Kala Rongo clinic to prescribe herbal remedies for many more people than would be possible using a hand-maintained pharmacy.



Photo: New clinic at Kala Rongo ©2002 Nyema Projects, Inc.



New Village Stupa Completed

Many of the villages in Nangchen have lost their representations of their native religion over the past few decades. Because Tibetan Buddhism remains such an integral part of their way of life, a group of villagers recently asked NYEMA to help them build a stupa, a symbolic representation of Buddha Shakyamuni's enlightenment. This stupa, which has now been completed through the generous donations of NYEMA patrons, is forty-five feet tall and contains a prayer wheel filled with one billion Dorje Sempa mantras. Tibetans believe that whenever the wheel is turned, the blessing of these mantras emanates throughout the surrounding region. Those who live near the new stupa feel continually blessed by it and are very grateful to have a representation of Buddhism restored to their area.



Environmental Conservation at Kala Rongo

Land adjacent to Kala Rongo was recently purchased with NYEMA funds to eventually create a formal nature preserve in that area. For now, a fence has been erected to discourage poachers, who are all too common a problem in Nangchen. Additionally, to help restore the natural environment and reverse the trend of deforestation, the nuns of Kala Rongo have planted a hundred and fifty pine and juniper trees purchased with NYEMA funding. In the future we would like to duplicate the fence and tree projects on the land surrounding Korche Monastery.

Photo: New village stupa completed ©2002 Nyema Projects, Inc.