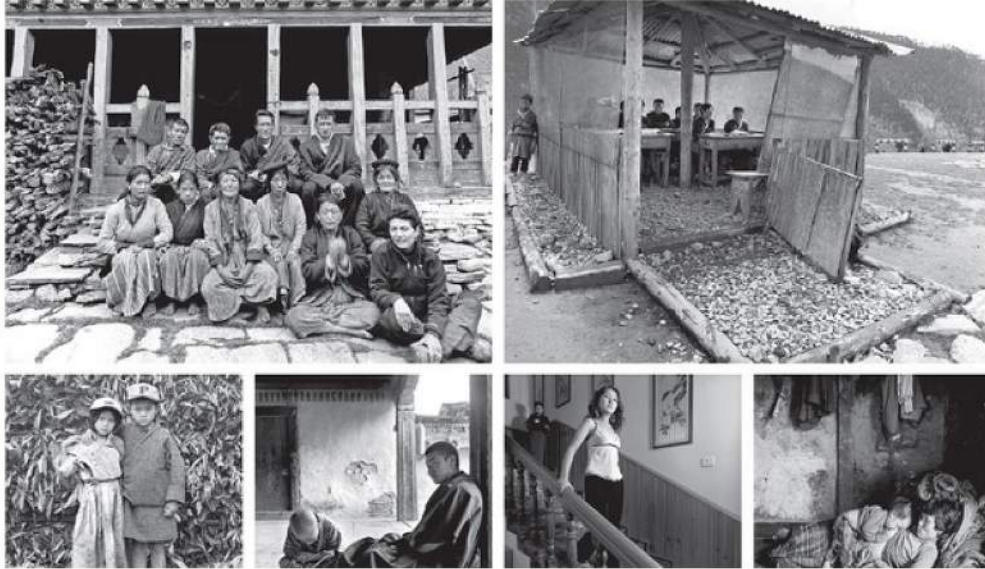


## Vignettes from a Mountain Kingdom



(Clockwise from top left) The author outside the Gengo Village lhakhang with local women, a shack serves as a village school, the author's adopted children, Lopon Yonten teaching a young monk, Yangchen dressed to party at a disco, Dorji feeds her baby.

### Interview: Serena chopra

'I used to write diaries with a torch at night in my tent'

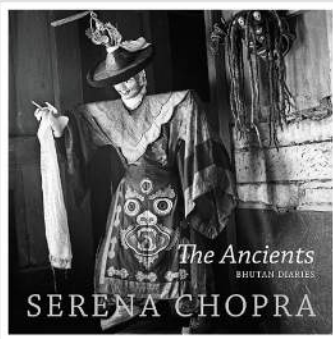
Serena Chopra tells Supriya Sharma about her book, Bhutan and her new projects.

Excerpts from the interview:

What is the story behind this book? Why Bhutan?

In the five years that I journeyed across the country, I used to write diaries every night with a torchlight in my tent. In August 2014, I relived those diaries and worked on this book.

What impresses you most about the Bhutanese?



They respect nature and life. Buddhist philosophy is deeply ingrained in how they think and what they do.

How have you seen the country change over the years?

It is getting to be more cosmopolitan. Everywhere you can see the impact of development and modernisation. So many five-star hotels have come up in Thimpu. You see more people in western dresses, which were earlier restricted to being evening wear.

What advice do you have for visitors to Bhutan?

I have never been to Bhutan as a tourist except for the first time. After that I went there with a seeking spirit. For me it is a country

where if you have the time, you should travel to the remoter areas where you get a sense of the people and their culture.

What next?



I am working on what I call my Himalayan Diaries. I have been exploring the Kumaon area based on an old ballad, 'Malushahi'. I am basing it following the route of the ballad from Tibet to Ranikhet. I am photographing their rites and ceremonies and writing on those.