

# SERENA CHOPRA

## Majnu Ka Tilla Diaries

We are honored to open our Fall Season with Serena Chopra's *Majnu Ka Tilla Diaries*, October 28th through December 10th, 2016.

In her most recent project, Chopra has explored the lives of the residents of Majnu Ka Tilla, a refugee colony of Tibetans in New Delhi where thousands of exiles have lived for nearly 40 years. Chopra informs her photographs with extensive personal interviews, coupling image and text in a diary-like format to reveal the sitter's views on life and a communal optimism that one day they will return to Tibet.

*"I wanted to get to know the real Tibetan, the person, his or her feelings, what his or her life was like in reality. Perhaps I would gain insight into what freedom meant to them."*

— SERENA CHOPRA

This beautiful and informative body of work is being exhibited for the first time at sepiaEYE. The high contrast, formally composed black-and-white images combine portraiture, revealing interiors, and mystifying exteriors to tell intimate stories of the inhabitants. With *Majnu Ka Tilla Diaries*, Chopra continues her investigative process of documenting a community with an emotional connection and an analytical distance, mirroring her earlier series on Bhutan that spanned over twelve years of work.

"Tibet is a prison for the Tibetans who live there and an irretrievable dream of a lost identity for those who escaped," states Chopra. "The Tibetan exodus of 1959 has culminated in more than 100,000 Tibetan refugees in India. Tibetan Buddhism stands to be wiped out along with its message of peace, happiness and equality for all. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who has been in exile since 1959, has struggled to remain a Buddhist spiritual leader while being considered as a political figurehead for his government in exile."

Chopra continues, "Majnu Ka Tilla is a no-man's land where though the Tibetans struggle to preserve their culture, religion and language, they treat it as temporary. They do not seek Indian citizenship or to belong because that would mean accepting defeat. The refrain is *Free Tibet* and their dream is to return to a free Tibet one day. They wonder what will happen when their parents' generation has passed away and the new generation has no roots in Tibet or elsewhere."

The inspiration for this project came from a conversation between Chopra and His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2006 when he suggested, "as a photographer you should do something to expose the Tibetan issue." Then he laughed, "of course after that you can photograph me too!"

With a Tibetan friend named Norsang, Chopra began to discover the community through her daily visits—filled at first with conversations and then arranging subsequent photo shoots. A diary was used to record the words of the residents in their own hand and language; these entries were then each accompanied with a corresponding Polaroid photograph Chopra passed in the books. Another image was made with film in her Hasselblad camera. This became the *Majnu Ka Tilla Diaries*."

Chopra was born in Secunderabad, India. Her first body of work from Bhutan was exhibited in solo shows in New Delhi, Bhutan, and New York. In 2016-2017 the work will be shown in five cities throughout India. A publication of this work, *Bhutan, A Certain Modernity* was released in 2007 with a foreword by Her Majesty, The Queen Mother, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. Chopra's work has been included in numerous group shows including The Travel Photo Jaipur Festival, 2016. Chopra's other publications include *The Ancients: Bhutan Diaries* (2015) and *Along the Ganga* (2015). She is currently working on a new project entitled, *Himalayan Diaries*. All titles will be available for purchase at the gallery.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### EXHIBITION LOCATION

547 West 27th Street, #608  
New York, NY 10001

### EXHIBITION DATES

October 28–December 10, 2016

### RECEPTION

Thursday, October 27, 6–8PM

### BOOK SIGNING

Various Titles

### PRESS CONTACT

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sepiaeye.com



Serena Chopra, *A Mother and her child, Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi, 2012*

