Most traditional Bhutanese farmhouses have large, open-air attics for storing grain and produce. This house is in Lhuentse in eastern Bhutan. Photo by Dorji Yangki

(Above) Typical of village landscapes throughout Bhutan are small clusters of houses with nearby Bhutanese-style chortens (Buddhist monuments that often contain relics). Photo by Preston Scott

The Treasure Vase (bumpa) represents the contents of Buddhist teachings and stands for long life and prosperity.

Most Bhutanese live on farms in small villages. The family farmhouse remains an important part of life.

A farmhouse is usually two or three stories high with a stone foundation and compacted-earth walls framed with wood. Houses feature a large, open attic for storing grain and produce and a protected ground floor where domestic animals, including cows, are often kept. Virtually all Bhutanese houses have altar rooms.

Furnishings are simple. Stairways to upper floors are often ladders carved from whole tree trunks. Windows are covered with sliding, ornately carved panels. Most wooden surfaces are colorfully painted with special designs and symbols. Large paintings of mythical animals or other symbols frequently decorate areas around the front door. Buddhists usually place a white prayer flag with blue, yellow, and red streamers on the roof of their home.