

A sheet of fog covered the mountains, roads and forest too of this tiny mountain village called Chaukori in Kumaon. There I met Manisha and Babita, both aged 13. They were neighbours and friends, living in curiously attractive tiny stone houses.

While Manisha was bold, had beautiful almond shaped eyes and thick long hair, Babita was a feeble girl who was often beaten by her grandmother if she didn't obey her. Obeying meant working all day long. She was 13 but looked like an 8-year-old kid.

In these village girls aged 10 are supposed to cook, help their mothers in fields, take cattle for grazing all day long, and collect wood for fuel. Life in the mountains is not easy, and particularly for women.

Sadly, these teenage girls were already being treated like women. But I wanted to photograph the child in them who perhaps still retains its innocence and finds happiness in nature. In unending pine forests set among the lofty peaks of western Himalayas, I was searching for our lost moments of childhood.