

A photograph of a tea plantation. In the foreground, there are rows of tea bushes. In the middle ground, three women are visible, working in the tea field. They are wearing headscarves and carrying baskets. The background is filled with lush green trees.

## **WOMEN/GIRLS OF THE TEA ESTATE**

**In their  
words**



# WOMEN/GIRLS Of The Tea Estate

interview by Shripriya Dalmia

I interviewed 20 exceptional women and girls of the Tea estate, to learn about their lives, their aspirations, what makes them laugh, their fears, their dreams...

In the following pages, are their lives, in their own words.





**Diya Basfore is a 14 year old student of Class IX and has been living at the tea estate since her birth.**

*She says:*

'The best thing about the tea estate are the people living here. I really wish I had better transportation facilities to go to school everyday. The most memorable moment at the tea estate was the dance performance on Independence day this year in front of everyone. I would really like to improve on my communication skills as the more we talk the more our language improves. My role model is Mamata Banerjee as she supports women empowerment and has done a lot for girls. I am scared of heights. I aspire to be a dancer. I would want the poverty conditions in the country to change.'



**Akansha Barai is a 17 year old student of Class IX.**

*She says:*

'I love everything at the tea estate especially the Lord Radha and Krishna temple along with the new Lord Shiva temple in front of my house. I really wish there were better schools near the tea estate. One of my favourite memories is after the Kali puja, when we performed the Dhausi dance and went door to door including everyone along with us. One thing I would like to change about my life is going and studying at a good school. I would like to be like my maternal uncle (mama) as he is a college student who is very good at studies and more than that he is a good human being. I am very scared of scorpions and I dream to be a nurse one day. I would really want Indians to reduce addiction towards alcohol.'



**Priti Chhetri is a 14 year old student of Class IX.**

*She says:*

'I love the natural beauty of the tea estate but the best thing is the factory. My most memorable moment was when I learnt kettle painting from Shripriya di. She is also my role model as she is a great painter and teaches girls of my age painting. She also does a lot of social work. I am scared of snakes. One day I would like to join the Indian army. I wish Indians would reduce use of plastic since it harms the environment. My life is perfect and I do not want to change anything about it.'



**Rina Chhetri is a student of Class X, living at the tea estate since the past 11 years.**

*She says:*

'I love the natural beauty of the tea estate but I miss my childhood friends from Matigara in Assam, where I spent my childhood. The most memorable moment of my life was my 15th birthday, it was amazing. I really wish that my family was not this conservative about my rights as a girl. I wish I had a little bit more freedom. I am very fond of singing and I want to be a singer like Neha Kakkar. I am afraid of darkness and I wish people in India were more aware about cleanliness.'





**Pallavi Barai is a 17 year old student of class IX.**

*She says:*

'The best about the tea estate is that I live with my entire family and the scenic beauty, hills and greenery is something I love a lot. I really wish I could live in Darjeeling. When I was 9 year old in the garden with my sister when an elephant came and chased us and that is the scariest moment of my life. I wish someone was there to guide me to become a singer as I love singing. My uncle is my role model who is a teacher at a university. I would like Indians to reduce their addiction towards alcohol and smoking. I am really scared of snakes and I want to be nurse when I grow up.'



**Kamta Sharma has been living since 2012 and is a housewife.**

*She says:*

'The best thing I love about living her is the clean air and the greenery although it gets really hot during the summers. I wish there was better access to markets, hospitals, etc as transportation may be an issue if we don't have a personal vehicle. One of the most unique experiences I have had while living here is spotting elephants and the possibility of seeing a tiger which I could never experience while living in the city. I simply aspire to have a happy, healthy and peaceful life with my family. losing them is my biggest fear. I wish the population of india came down "we are good people but we are too many".'



**Reshmi Malbaria has been at the tea estate for the last 30 years.**

*She says:*

'I love living at the tea estate as I can work here throughout the year and I never want to leave this place and go. I don't think we should expect better things to happen to us if we don't work hard. I am very scared of snakes. I wish my son becomes successful in life in whatever he does.'



**Sangeeta has been living at the tea estate since the past 15 years and is a tea plucker.**

*She says:*

'I get the opportunity to work all throughout the year which I did not get in my previous job. Every moment I spend at the tea garden is a memorable one. I wish my family and I prosper in the years to come. I want to improve myself everyday. I am scared of falling sick because I support my family.'



**Ranjana Pandey has been living at the tea estate for the past 10 years and is a housewife.**

*She says:*

'I love the location of the tea estate as it is very peaceful but the thing I love the most is the temple which is like the cherry on a cake. Living here deprives me of living with my daughter and I really miss her. I wish I lived a healthier life. My role model is our former prime minister Mr. Atal Bihari Bajpai because of his selfless love towards the nation, it is inspirational. I am terrified of snakes. My dream is to see my daughter as a successful woman one day. I want Indians to change their mentality towards women.'





**Monika Das who has been living at the tea estate for 3 years and is a house wife**

*She says:*

'I love the people, atmosphere and the weather of the estate. The greenery makes happy and gives me peace of mind. I miss my family while staying here. My most memorable experience was distributing clothes to the children of the garden workers. I would want to improve my behaviour and personality towards everyone. My father and my husband are my role models because they are very hardworking. Losing my family is my biggest fear. I aspire and dream to open a centre of education for the poor. I want india to be pollution-free.'



**Sanjukta Goswami who has been living at the tea estate for 3 years is a housewife**

*She says:*

'I love living here the most in this scenic beauty. i love the temple located in the tea estate, which creates a spiritual environment, we also have a mosque and church and I love the fact that everyone can follow and practice their religion. I do miss my hometown Kolkata on various occasions. My favourite memory is new years eve 2018, when I along with other ladies prepared dinner and played musical chairs our husbands were so enthusiastic that some of even tripped while playing. I wish I could manage my time in a better way so that I utilise my education in a better way. I really look up to Ratan Tata whose kindness and social responsibility has really inspired me. I fear being alone when I grow old. I wish I can inculcate good values into my daughter and make her a good person and encourage her to fulfil her dreams. I really want Indians to stop spitting in public area as it destroys the beauty of the country.'



**Sudha Jha is a 17 year old living in the tea estate since birth she is a student of Class XI**

*She says:*

'I really like the facilities provided by the owners they are very helpful when I am in need. I don't think I am missing out on much living here but if had the chance I would love to travel all across India. I consider my experience with *Pehchaan* as one of the most memorable ones. I would like to be a patriot like our prime minister Narendra Modi. I am scared of losing my education as it is very necessary in today's world. My biggest dream is to make my father proud. I want to study and stand on my feet so that I can help my family solve our financial problems. I want India to be pollution free as we need a healthy environment for us to be healthy.'



**Ramika Toppo is a tea plucker is here since birth**

*She says:*

'One thing that I really appreciate about the tea estate is that everything is available even though it is far away from the city. I dream that I have a beautiful house in Darjeeling where I can live with my family. One incident that I will never forget is when I was on the way to Kalimpong with my family and I was at the brim of an accident. I wish people leave all sorts of harmful addictions so that all of us can live a healthier life. My role model is Narendra Modi. My biggest fear is that my sons goes into the wrong path. I want to build my childs future and live in my own house one day. I want to bring unity and brotherhood among all people.'



**Salina Toppo has been living here for the past sixteen year**

*She says:*

'The best thing about the tea estate is that everything is available especially things such as ambulance. My best memories are ones of the time I spent at my mothers house. I really love spending time talking to my children. My role model is Surendar Panwar the factory manager because of his punctuality. I wish I can educate my chld so that he can support us when he grows up. I really wish I have a big car to travel in. I want all Indians respect all religions.'



**Asha Gore has been working and living in the garden since the past 10 years.**

*She says:*

'I really love the employment opportunities at the tea estate and the location too. I really miss my old home in Nagrakata. Something that I will never forget is when my husband passed away and I had to take full responsibility of my family. I wish people leave all sorts of addictions. My biggest dream is to secure my daughters future. I really look up to the gardens management and security who also protect us from wild elephants. I wish women are treated equally as men.'



**Pusho Gore has been living and working at the tea estate since birth**

*She says:*

'I love the location of the tea estate as it is very beautiful and peaceful. My husbands death is my worst memory. I wish I can be more punctual. My role model is a woman called Butni, a senior plucker. I wish male dominance did not prevail to this extent in India. I wish I can help my child pursue his career to become a soldier. I want to remove all social insecurities.'

**Manisha Bara has been living at the garden since birth**

*She says:*

'I really love the natural beauty of the tea estate. I miss living at m. I wish male dominance did not prevail to this extent in India. I wish I can help my child pursue his career to become a soldier. I want to remove all social insecurities.'

17. Manisha Bara has been living at the garden since birth

*She says*

'I really love the natural beauty of the tea estate. I miss living at my old house in Malbazar. My biggest fear is that after my death there will not be anyone to take care of my family. I want to secure my children's future and to fulfil their dream of becoming policemen. I wish people would leave all sorts of addictions. I hope one day everyone would stop thinking bad about others. My role model are policemen because they are so hardworking and protect everyone from all dangers.'





**Saraswati Dutta has been living at the tea estate since that past 4 years**

*She says:*



'I love how there are people from different parts of the country living and working together in this tea estate peacefully. The diversity amazes me. I don't miss out on anything living here since living here feels like I am living with my family. I wish one day I can live in America with my family. One of the most memorable moments was when there were clothes distribution and dogs vaccination. Seeing everyone happy made me really happy too. I wouldn't want change anything about my life here. I have no specific role model, I just follow good thoughts of people. I wish people stop being so selfish and start caring about the environment. We should stop cutting trees and killing animals to satisfy our own needs. The environment is being destroyed too. I wish one day I could finish my LLB and also open a yoga centre. I wish drug abuse would stop in India.'

**Pabitra Rao is a 14 year old studying in Class VIII and living in the tea estate since birth**

*She says:*



'I love the people living in the tea estate. My dream is to live in Delhi. My most memorable experience was when I went for a school picnic with all my friends at a nearby park. Another experience that I cant forget is when I painted kettles with Shripriya Dalmia. She taught us how to paint kettles and make designs and everyone at home really liked it. I wish I was exposed to better education to make life easier for my family. My role model is my elder sister as she is a good student and is very responsible. I am very scared of dogs as I had a very scary childhood experience with one. I want to be an artist when I grow up. I want Indians to reduce the use of plastics and dispose garbage in dustbins.'

**20. Mariam Rao is living at the estate since the last thirty years she is a worker at the tea estate**

*She says:*



'I love this place as my family is from here I have also because I spent my entire childhood here another thing that I really appreciate is that we get all the facilities that we need. I really want to earn enough money to buy my own house. My most memorable experiences are from my childhood. I wish I can change my financial position to support my family. I want to be like my mother who brought me up in hard times. I want to make my parents happy and proud of whatever I do. I want people in our country to conserve water.'





