

## Lost Spring (Anees Jung)

Theme : The plight of street children forced into labour early in life and denied the opportunity of schooling.

Sub theme : The callousness of society and the political class to the sufferings of the poor.

Lost Spring is an excerpt from Anees Jung's book titled Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood. Here she analyses the grinding poverty and traditions which condemn these children to a life of exploitation.

Saheb is a ragpicker from Seemapuri. Seemapuri is a place on the outskirts of Delhi. Those who live here are squatters who came from Bangladesh back in 1971. More than 10,000 ragpickers live in subliminal conditions. They have no identification other than a ration card. The children do not go to school. Survival in Seemapuri means ragpicking. Saheb-e-Alam, lord of the universe, has taken up a job in a tea stall. He is paid 800 rupees and all meals. He has lost the carefree look. He is no longer his own master.

Mukesh is a bangle maker from Firozabad. It is the centre of India's bangle making industry. More than 20,000 children slog their daylight hours around the hot furnaces, often losing the brightness of their eyes. They work in the abysmal conditions, in dark and dingy cells. The cry of not having money to do anything except carry on the business of making bangles, not even enough to eat, rings in every home. They have fallen into the vicious circle of middlemen who trapped their fathers and fore fathers. Years of mind-numbing toil have killed all initiative and the ability to dream. The writer is happy when Mukesh announces that he wishes to become a motor mechanic when he grows up.

The writer has poignantly essayed these stories to sensitise the readers to the plight of these poor and unfortunate children.

## Question and Answers

1. What is Saheb looking for in the garbage dumps? Where is he and where he has come from?

Saheb, a ragpicker, is looking for 'gold' in the garbage dumps. Saheb is living in Seemapuri, a slum at the outskirts of Delhi. His family has originally come from Dhaka.

2. What explanations does the author offer for the children not wearing footwear?

The explanations are : It is not lack of money but a tradition to stay barefoot. The author thinks this is only an excuse to explain away a perpetual poverty.

3. Is Saheb happy working at the tea stall? Explain (cbse 2010)

Saheb is not happy working at the tea stall. He has lost the carefree look. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he could carry so lightly over his shoulder. The bag was his. The canister belongs to the owner of the shop.

4. What makes the city of Firozabad famous?

Firozabad is the centre of India's glass blowing industry where families have spent generations working around furnaces, welding glass and making glass bangles for all the women in the land.

5. Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry? (cbse 2011)

The bangle makers work around the glass furnaces with high temperatures. They work in dingy cells without air and light. Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to the light . So they lose their eyesight before they become adults.

6. How is Mukesh's attitude to his situation different from that of his family?

Mukesh has a flash of daring nature. He has hopes and dreams. He wants to be a motor mechanic not a bangle maker.

7. The life of bangle makers of Firozabad was full of obstacles which forced them to lead a life of poverty and deprivation. Discuss with reference to 'Lost Spring' 10 marks (cbse sample paper)