

FLAMINGO

CHAPTER-2

LOST SPRING

About the author



Anees Jung
Born at Rourkela, India in 1964

She is an Indian woman author, journalist and columnist. She belongs to an aristocratic family of poets.

Her most noted work, *Unveiling India* (1987) was a detailed chronicle of the lives of women in India.

Gist of the Lessons

Sometimes I find a rupee in garbage

- The author here is analyzing the poor conditions and traditions that push children to live a life of exploitation. They are also denied education and face hardships quite early in their lives.
- The writer comes across Saheb – a rag picker whose parents have left Dhaka and their life of poverty to earn a living in Delhi.
- Just like many other families, even his family lives in Seemapuri. They don't own any other identification other than a ration card.
- These children can't afford to go to school but get excited when they find a coin or even a ten rupee note while rummaging in the garbage.
- This is their only way of earning.

- The writer feels awful to see Saheb, a rag picker whose name also means the ruler of earth. But the poor child has lost his childhood and roams barefooted with his friends.
- Right from morning to afternoon, the author comes across him in a tea stall. Saheb becomes sad as he realizes that he is no longer the master of his own destiny and the loss of identity weighs heavily on his tender shoulders.

I want to drive a car

- The author sheds light on another victim of child labour, Mukesh who dreams of becoming a motor mechanic.
- But the child has always worked in the glass making industry.
- They get exposed to many health hazards such as losing their eyesight as they work in appalling conditions, in dark and dingy cells.
- Mukesh's father is blind and even his father and grandfather were blind.
- So, the bangle makers of Firozabad are so burdened that they have stopped dreaming unlike Mukesh who wants to drive a car.

QUESTIONS

Q1. To which country did Saheb's parents originally belong? Why did they come to India?

- Saheb's parents originally belonged to Bangladesh (Dhaka). They came to India to earn their livelihood because, in Dhaka, floods had damaged their fields and home.

Q2. What is Saheb looking for in the garbage dumps. From where did he come and why?

- Saheb's family came from Bangladesh in 1971 to live in Seemapuri, Delhi. They had come there because their homes and fields were destroyed by storms. They had nothing left to live on.

He was always searching for a coin or a rupee or something valuable in the garbage dumps. He did this as he had no other work to do. The garbage dump was a treasure box for Saheb.

Q3. Describe the irony in Saheb's name?

Saheb's full name was Saheb-e-Alam. It means the 'Lord of the Universe'. But the irony was that the poor boy was not even his own master. He was a rag-picker and a refugee from Bangladesh whose family had settled down in Seemapuri after their fields were destroyed by storms and floods. Instead of being a lord, he wandered on the roads along with other barefooted poor boys like him.

Q4. What did garbage mean to the children of Seemapuri and to their parents?

- To the children, the garbage is wrapped in wonder. They keep looking for something exciting in it - a coin, a ten rupee note. To parents, it was means of survival as it is the only means of their earning.

Q5. What job did Saheb take up? Was he happy?

- Saheb took up a job at a tea stall where he got eight hundred rupees a month. No, he was not happy there as he had become a servant. He was no longer his own master and had to work according to the whims and fancies of the tea stall owner. He had lost his freedom.

Q6. What is Mukesh's dream? Do you think he will be able to fulfil his dream? Why? Why not?

- Mukesh is a young boy whose family is engaged in making bangles. Mukesh's dream is to become a motor mechanic. Yes, he will be able to fulfil his dream as he has a strong determination and wants to improve his living condition.

Q7. Mention the hazard of working in a bangle factory?

- In a bangle factory people work in ill-lit ventilated rooms in an unhygienic, dingy environment with high temperatures. Children have their backs bent away from a very young age, they lose their eyesight and become old before time.

Q8. Why can't the bangle makers of Firozabad organize themselves into cooperative?

- The bangle makers of Firozabad can't organize themselves because even if they get organised, they are the ones who will be hauled up by the police, beaten and dragged to jail for doing something illegal. There is no leader among them, no one could help them see things differently.

Q9. How is Mukesh different from other bangle makers of Firozabad?

- Mukesh is different from other bangle makers of Firozabad because unlike others, he wanted to break the chains of age old family lineage and aspires to become a motor mechanic. He wanted to come out of the vicious circle of the life of poverty.

Q10. How are Saheb and Mukesh different from each other?

- Saheb works for a dairy. He has lost his freedom and has no dreams. Mukesh on the other hand has dreams and aspires to become a motor mechanic.

TITLE

As the title “Lost Spring” has a tinge of irony. Spring is the best season of a year. Being full of colour, fragrance and freshness, it is also a season of renewal and growth. The childhood of human life is often likened to spring, as it marks the beginning of human life and has a tremendous scope for growth. It is full of joy, pleasure and play. Children anywhere in the world are a source of great joy. But, ironically, millions of children like Saheb and Mukesh experience no spring in their lives, for their childhood is consumed in making a living. Education, play and pleasure are not for them to enjoy. They must work to support themselves and their families.

Thus the title brings out the depravity of child labour in a very telling way.