

## **The Lost Spring**

- Anees Jung

The story, “Lost Spring” describes the pitiable condition of poor children who have been forced to miss the joy of childhood due to the socio-economic condition that prevails in this man-made world. These children are denied the opportunity of schooling and forced into labour early in life. Anees Jung gives voice to eliminate child labour by educating the children and to enforce the laws against child labour by the governments strictly. The call is to end child exploitation and let the children enjoy the days of the spring that bring joy under their feet.

### **SHORT SUMMARY:**

**Summary of the Lesson “the Lost Spring – Stories of stolen Childhood”** – The author tells us stories of her interactions with children from deprived backgrounds. She describes their poor condition and life in an interesting manner. The story touches the reader and is thought-provoking.

The author described two of her encounters with children from deprived backgrounds. Through them she wants to highlight the plight of street children forced into labour early in life and are denied the opportunity of schooling. Also, she brings out the callousness of society and the political class towards the sufferings of the poor. The first encounter is with a rag picker boy named Saheb – E – Alam who migrated from Bangladesh in 1971 and lives in Seemapuri in Delhi. These ragpicker children look for ‘valuables’ in the garbage – things like a coin or torn shoes which are as precious as ‘gold’ for them. They could hardly manage some food for themselves, other things like identity, education, shoes and sports are their unfulfilled dreams.

Their parents scrounged the garbage searching for things that helped them survive – afford food, clothing and shelter for the family. The children hunted through the garbage heaps looking for things which could partially fulfil their unfulfilled dreams. One day the writer saw the boy, holding a steel can, going towards the milk booth. He had got a job at a tea stall. He was happy that he would get eight hundred rupees and all the meals. The writer noticed that Saheb had lost the freedom of being his own master which he had enjoyed as a rag picker. The second boy was Mukesh who belonged to a family of bangle makers in Firozabad. The boy had a dream of becoming a car mechanic. On the contrary, his family was traditionally engaged in bangle making, although the profession harmed them physically and they hardly earned any money out of it. Still, no one dared to dream of doing something else due to the fear of the police and the middlemen. The family elders were content that other than teaching the art of bangle-making to their children, they had been able to build them a house to live in. The boy wanted to be a car mechanic. Cars were all that Mukesh had seen on the roads of his town and so, he could not dream any further.

### **PART – 1**

**The rag-pickers of Seemapuri (‘Sometimes I find a rupee in the garbage’)**

**Gist of the story:-** (THE AUTHOR’S ENCOUNTERING SAHEB OVER THE MONTHS)

- The author examines and analyses the impoverished conditions and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation these children are denied an education and forced into hardships early in their lives.

- The writer encounters Saheb – a rag picker whose parents have left behind the life of poverty in Dhaka to earn a living in Delhi.
- His family like many other families of rag pickers lives in Seemapuri. They do not have other identification other than a ration card.
- The children do not go to school and they are excited at the prospect of finding a coin or even a ten rupee note for rummaging in the garbage.
- It is the only way of earning.
  - The writer is pained to see Saheb, a rag picker whose name means the ruler of earth, lose the spark of childhood and roam barefooted with his friends.
  - From morning to noon the author encounters him in a tea stall and is paid Rs. 800. He sadly realizes that he is no longer his own master and this loss of identity weighs heavily on his tender shoulders.

#### **MAIN POINTS:**

- The writer encounters Saheb every morning scrounging for gold in the garbage.
- Saheb – e – Alam, a refugee from Dhaka is a rag picker.
- He like many other children of his slum wants to go to school but can't – very poor.
- He lives in Seemapuri - a locality on the periphery of Delhi without any basic amenities.
- Most of the rag pickers live here. All are rag pickers. (squatters from Bangladesh)
- Food is more important for them than identity.
  - Rag picking is their only occupation where children are involved in this occupation but rag picking is different for children and adults.
- For adults – means of survival.
- For children – wrapped in wonders. (sometimes they find a rupee or a five rupee note in the garbage and that makes them scrounge more and more)
- Sahib gets a job at a tea-stall; earns Rs. 800 a month and all his meals but is unhappy.
- He loses his freedom and carefree look and there he loses his childhood or we can say his spring is lost.

#### **IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:**

**Read the story revolving around the mentioned points and answer the following questions.**

- What could be some of the reasons for the migration of people from villages to cities?
  - Would you agree that promises made to poor children are rarely kept? Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the text?
- What reasons do the children give for their roaming barefooted? What does this suggest about them?
- Why has the author narrated the story of a man from Udipi?
- Describe the irony in Saheb's name.

#### **PART – II**

The bangle makers of  
Firozabad ('I want to  
drive a car')

Gist of the story:-

(AUTHOR'S MEETING MUKESH WITH A SURVIVING DREAM)

- 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 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.

### **MAIN POINTS:**

- The author comes across Mukesh in Firozabad.
  - His family like other families is engaged in making bangles over the generations but Mukesh insists on being his own master.
- He desires to become a motor mechanic.
- They work in dingy cells without any light or air and sit beside bright furnaces with high temperatures.
- Therefore, many of them become blind at a very young age.
- They don't have money to do anything else than carrying on the profession of bangle making.
- They can't organize themselves into a co-operative.
  - They are genuinely afraid of being hauled up by police, middlemen and sahu-kars due to their engaging children in their business and doing something illegal.
- There is no leader among them.
- They talk of poverty, apathy, greed and injustice.
- The author is happy to find the dream of doing something else alive with Mukesh.

### **IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:**

Read the story revolving around the mentioned points and answer the following questions.

- Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry
- What forces conspire to keep the workers of Firozabad in poverty?
- "It is his karam, his destiny." What is Mukesh's family's attitude towards their situation?
- How is Mukesh different from the other bangle-makers of Firozabad?
- How is Mukesh's attitude to his situation different from that of his family?