

Lost Spring - Important Questions

Lost Spring is written by a famous short-story writer Anees Jung. The story is an excerpt from her book titled 'Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood'. Here, she writes about the utter poverty and traditions which force these children to a life of exploitation. Anees Jung highlights the utter destitution of ragpickers of Seemapuri, and the bangle makers of Firozabad.

Important Questions with Answers

Q. What does Saheb look for in the garbage dumps? Or What is Saheb looking for in the garbage dumps? Where is he and where has he come from?

In the garbage dumps, Saheb looks for useful items which can be sold for cash. As these items can be traded for money, they are just like 'gold' for him. Saheb and his family live in Seemapuri, a slum on the periphery of Delhi. His family had migrated from Bangladesh.

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

The author has seen many children in the villages as well as cities in India walking barefoot. The general explanation is that it is not lack of money but a tradition to stay barefoot. The author, however, is not sure. She thinks that in many cases it may be an excuse to explain away a perpetual state of poverty.

Q. What makes the city of Firozabad famous?

The city of Firozabad is famous for its bangles. It is the center of India's glass glowing industry. Here are families who have spent generations working around furnaces, welding glass, and making bangle for all the women of the country.

Q. Why had the ragpickers come to live in Seemapuri? Or To which country did Saheb's parents originally belong? Why did they come to India? Or Why did Saheb's parents leave Dhaka and migrate to India?

Once Saheb's parents lived in Bangladesh, amidst the green fields of Dhaka. There were many storms that swept away their fields and homes. That's why they migrated to Delhi and settled down in Seemapuri looking for an occupation.

Q. What could be some of the reasons for the migration of people from villages to cities?

Poverty and unemployment are the two most important reasons for the migration of the people from villages to cities. Many people in the villages do not have enough to survive somehow. That is why people travel from as far as Bangladesh to Seemapuri in Delhi. Though the life in the slums of Seemapuri is very bad but they are able to feed themselves working as rag pickers.

The glare of the city life also attracts many villagers. They are able to sell their land at a hefty price and then buy a house in the city. The young love the city life for its crowd, activity and various type of entertainments which it offers.

Q. Describe the irony in Saheb's name.

Saheb's name in full is Saheb-e-Alam, which means 'Lord of the Universe'. But in stark contrast to his name, Saheb is poverty stricken, barefoot, homeless ragpicker who scrounges the garbage dumps of Delhi to take out a livelihood. His name is in total contrast to his very existence and is thus deeply ironical.

Q. What kind of gold did the people of Seemapuri look for in the garbage?

The people of Seemapuri look for items in the garbage which can be traded for money, meaning 'gold', as it helps them earn their daily bread and have a roof over their heads. For a child, garbage may mean something wrapped in wonder, whereas for the elders it is a means of survival.

Q. In what sense is garbage gold to the ragpickers? Or What did garbage mean to the children of Seemapuri and to their parents?

Garbage means 'gold' to the poor ragpickers because some of it can be sold for cash, thus becoming a means of survival for the children of Seemapuri and for their parents. It is providing them with their daily bread and a roof over their heads.

Q. What forces conspire to keep the workers in bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty?

Many forces conspire to keep the workers in bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty. They are of two types. One is the caste of the people who make bangles. They have the stigma of caste which has been making bangles for many generations. The second factor is the vicious cycle of the sahuokaras, middleman, the policeman, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats, and the politicians. The poor need a leader to guide them. Otherwise, the circumstances have imposed the baggage on the child that he can not put down. It needs a lot of courage to go against ones caste and also to fight the vicious circle as well.

Q. Would you agree that promises made to poor children are rarely kept? Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the texts?

It is really true that the promised made to the poor children are seldom kept. In the story this happens because the author was not really serious when he made the promise to Saheb. He had not imagined that Sahib could really be serious about going to school. Even when he made the promise, the author says he was "half-joking". So How can one keep a promise made as a joke? In fact he never meant to keep the promise.

Q. How in your opinion can Mukesh realize his dream?

Muskesh can realize his dream only if he is determined to do what he wants. It is impossible to find work in a garage. Of course, he will have to face the opposition from his family and he will have to work very hard at least at initial stages. To learn to repair car he will have to work as a labour in the garage. Only after years of hard labour, he will become a good motor mechanic and ultimately be able to drive a car.

Q. Why should child labour be eliminated and how?

Child labour should be eliminated for two important reasons. First, a child should be sent to school because if he gets no education there are no chances of his progress in life. He will be a burden on his family. Second reason is that he is deprived of the childhood which means a time of playing and enjoying. It is necessary of the health of child. If, however, in this age they are sent to work, they work in unhealthy conditions at low wages. After all, they work not because adults are not available but because children are ready to work for really small wages. Their parents send them to work because even a little money is better than no money. So child labor must be eliminated. For this free education alone is not enough. The poor children should be kept in hostels and the society should bear all their expenses.

Q. What does the reference to chappals in 'Lost Spring' tell as about the economic

condition of the rag pickers?

The ragpickers were extremely poor. They did not have any money to buy chappals. They were poor and impoverished. They lived a hand-to-mouth existence. They were exploited and had no other work to do. They did not have a house to live in too.

Q. How was Saheb's life at the tea stall? Or What job did Saheb take up? Was he happy? Or Is Saheb happy working at the tea stall? Explain.

No, Saheb does not seem happy working at the tea stall. He is no longer his master and that, relaxed look on his face is also lost. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag that he would carry so lightly over his shoulder. It was because the bag was his and the canister belonged to the man who owned the tea stall.

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

Mukesh belongs to bangle-makers of Firozabad where each family is engaged in bangle-making. On asking, Mukesh says, "I will be a motor mechanic." Thus, he wants to be his own master. Yes, he has strong determination. He wants to improve his living conditions. However, because he caught up in the vicious cycle created by others, he will not be able to realise his dream and will remain a bangle-maker.

Q. "It is his karam, his destiny." What is Mukesh's family's attitude towards their situation? Or How is Mukesh different from the other bangle-makers of Firozabad? Or How is Mukesh's attitude to his situation different from that of his family?

Mukesh's grandmother whose husband became blind with the dust from polishing the glass of bangles accepts the destiny of her husband. She says that her husband was destined to go blind. It was his karam, his destiny. But Mukesh has the courage to dream of becoming a motor mechanic, thus breaking free from destiny.

Q. Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry.

The glass bangles industry has a very hazardous working environment. People work in the glass furnaces with high temperatures, in dingy cells without air and light. Most end up losing their eyesight even before they become adults. Adding to their misery, they are caught in a vicious circle of people who exploit them.

Q. Why could the bangle-makers not organise themselves into a co-operative?

Most of the young bangle-makers have fallen into the trap of the middlemen. They are also afraid of the police. They know that the police will haul them up, beat them and drag to jail for doing something illegal. There is no leader among them to help them see things differently.

Q. Whom does Anees Jung blame for the sorry Plight of the bangle-makers?

Anees Jung blames the vicious circle of the sahu-kars (moneylenders), middlemen, Policemen, bureaucrats and politicians for the plight of the bangle-makers. They don't allow the bangle-makers to organise themselves into a cooperative.

Q. In spite of despair and disease pervading the lives of the slum children, they are not devoid of hope. How far do you agree?

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In spite of growing up amidst despair and disease, the children who live in slums have the desire to achieve something big in life. This shows that they are not devoid of hope. Saheb, a ragpicker, is eager to go to school and learn. Mukesh, who works in dark, dingy cells making bangles, dreams of becoming a motor mechanic, against his family tradition.

Q. The barefoot ragpickers of Seemapuri live on the periphery of Delhi yet, metaphorically speaking, miles away from it. Comment.

The barefoot ragpickers of Seemapuri live on the periphery of Delhi, yet metaphorically speaking, miles away from it, sums up the true condition of the ragpickers of Seemapuri. Seemapuri is a slum area, which houses approximately 10,000 ragpickers. They live in mud houses with roofs of tin and tarpaulin. There is no sewage, drainage or running water. They came here from Bangladesh in 1971 and have been living here ever since without any identity of their own or permits, but they have ration cards and their names figure in the voter's list. This is an example of the gross negligence and apathy of the Delhi Government. It has failed to do anything for them. Though Seemapuri is so close to Delhi, almost on its periphery, yet the glitter and glamour, advantages like education, proper facilities for living a clean and decent life are beyond the reach of these slum dwellers of Seemapuri, which is so close to Delhi yet so far.

Q. Give a brief account of life and activities of the people like Saheb-e-Alam settled in Seemapuri. Or "For the children it is wrapped in wonder, for the elders it is a means of survival." What kind of life do the ragpickers of Seemapuri lead?

Seemapuri is a slum area located on the periphery of Delhi. Most of the residents of Seemapuri consist of people who are refugees from Bangladesh. Saheb's family is among them. The area consists of mud structures, with roofs of tin and tarpaulin. It has no facilities of sewage, drainage or running water. About 10,000 rag pickers live here.

Their only means of livelihood is finding saleable items from rubbish. Thus, for them, the rubbish is as valuable as gold, for their survival depends on these. These ragpickers have lived here for more than thirty years without any identity. They have no permits but have ration cards, thanks to the selfish whims and wishes of the politicians. With these they can get their name on the voter's lists and also buy grains for themselves at a subsidised rate.

Q. Describe the difficulties the bangle-makers of Firozabad have to face in their lives. Or Describe the circumstances which keep the workers in the bangle industry in poverty.

The bangle-makers of Firozabad lead a miserable and pathetic life. They live and work in inhuman conditions. They work in dingy cells, without air and light. They have to work in the glass furnaces with high temperatures. Most of them lose their eyesight before they become adults. They live amidst stinking lanes choked with garbage. Their houses have crumbling walls, shaky doors and no windows. They work in the dark hutments in the light of flames of flickering oil lamps. Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to the light outside. That is why they often lose their eyesight. They face many difficulties in their lives. They are exploited by the money lenders, the middlemen and the bureaucrats. Even the police does not protect them. They are caught in the web of poverty, burdened by the stigma of caste in which they are born. In fact, no change has taken place in their lives with the passage of time. They are as poor and miserable as they were before.

Q. What circumstances forced Mukesh not to pursue his family business of bangle making? Instead, what did he decide to do?

Mukesh's family had a family business of making bangles. He did not want to do that because the

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chances of going blind due to the glass dust was high. The whole family was involved in it yet they were not able to earn much. This made them fall into the vicious circle of the money lenders after which they never come out. The debt would go on for generations. All these reasons made him want to leave his family business of bangle making. Instead, he decided to become a motor mechanic and learn to drive.

Q. How is Mukesh more ambitious in life than Saheb? Give a reasoned answer.

Mukesh is definitely more ambitious than Saheb. Unlike most of his friends in Firozabad, Mukesh did not want to follow the profession of making bangles. No one else could dare to think of breaking the conventional style of living. Mukesh dreamt of becoming a motor mechanic. He had already decided to go to a garage and learn about cars. Though the garage was a long way from his home, he was prepared to walk that distance. He insisted on becoming his own master. Saheb, on the other hand had sacrificed his freedom as a ragpicker to take up a salaried job that would pay him 800 rupees and give him all his meals. Now he was no longer his own master. He had lost his carefree look (which he had when he was a ragpicker). The canister that he carried seemed heavier than the bag he carried as ragpicker, for this job was not to his liking.

Q. How is Mukesh's attitude towards his situation different from that of Saheb? Why?

Mukesh belongs to a bangle-making family, but he is not content with this profession. He dares to dream of becoming a motor mechanic and driving cars. He has strong will power and wants to achieve what he dreams about, unlike other people in his family. In contrast to this, Saheb is a ragpicker who is content with his life, but becomes unhappy when he gets a job at a tea stall, even though now he is probably earning more and on a regular basis. Saheb is unhappy because he has lost his independence, which he had as a ragpicker. However, Saheb accepts his new situation, whereas Mukesh dares to want to break free from tradition. This is because Mukesh is more courageous and determined than Saheb will ever be.

Q. 'Lost Spring' explains the grinding poverty and traditions that condemn thousands of people to a life of abject poverty. Do you agree ? Why/Why not?

'Lost Spring' brings home of the dark reality that there are thousands of people who live in a state of abject poverty. The story of both. Saheb in Seemapuri and Mukesh in Firozabad, show the dark reality the lives of so many people. The stories reveal the sheer destitution of the people in the slums and also the life of exploitation that they lead. The children do not go to school. Society as well as their parents neglect them. The stories also tell us that once those people get into the vicious circle of money lenders they are not able to get out of it.

Q. In India we believe in prayers. Whenever we are faced with a problem we pray to God. A son of a priest at Udipi while going to school prayed at the temple for a pair of shoes. Thirty years later we find his son well dressed in a school uniform. What has brought about the change - the father's prayer or the father having gone to school or both ? Give a reasonable answer.

It was indeed the fact that the father had gone to school and received education because of which his son was wearing a school uniform. Education gave him opportunities to improve the quality of not his life but also of his family and children. Prayers alone cannot help us. We have to put in our efforts to make the things better. The father while going to school not only prayed for school shoes but also must have made efforts to get himself educated. The result was that he was able to get for his son whatever he could not have for himself.

Q. Why should Child labour be eliminated and how?

Child labour is a curse in our society and it must be eliminated. Childhood is a period of mental and spiritual development. This development is only possible if children lead a carefree life and interact with other children, play with them and learn with them. But a child labourer is deprived of these. He has to work for long hours which is not good for them. They are exploited and abused. Their innocent minds do not understand the perils of their working conditions. To eliminate child labour, is a tremendous task. Most child labourers come from poor homes, some of them have lost their parents and have to support their families. Unless the poverty of the family is removed and children get education, training and financial support, child labour cannot be banned or removed. I agree, that the promises made to the poor children are seldom kept. In the text, the author promised to Saheb that she would start a school and he would be able to read there. But she did not mean to build a school. So in the very first place the promise was not meant to be kept. It is an insincere promise. The government has made laws that no child can work in a glass-bangle industry. There are 20,000 poor children working there. They are still there inspite of the law. It is because the government is unable to provide basic necessities to them like employment, free education etc. So, the laws are not enforced. Moreover there is no political will. Poor children are helpless.

Q. 'Lost Spring' brings out the condition of some children in India who do not go to school, work in inhuman conditions and live in slums. We, as Indians, have failed in our duty in some way. What values do we need to inculcate among the People to bring back the 'spring' in the lives of these poor children?

In 'Lost Spring' Mukesh, Savita and Saheb are all victims of child labour. We have not understood their situation adequately. To bring back the 'spring' in the lives of these poor children, we must inculcate the values to

1. have a strong will to ensure that all children get basic education. This may be done by helping them join the 'open school' system.
2. have a sense of commitment of wanting to help these children; an example can be to find better employment for the adults in their families.
3. say 'NO' to child labour in any work related to us during the children's school hours.
4. feel the need of doing something for such children, exemplifying the saying, 'where there is a will, there is a way'.
5. create awareness in society about the plight of the underprivileged so that people in power can help them.

Q. 'Lost Spring' explains the grinding poverty and tradition that force little children to work at the age of mental and spiritual development. Write an article on 'Child labour – A Blot On Our Society'.

Child Labour – A Blot on Our Society

Child labour is a curse in our society which condemns children to lead a life of exploitation. It deprives them of schooling and forces them to a perpetual state of poverty. None cares about their dreams which loom like a mirage. Children are forced to work in factories, dhabas, industries, tea stalls for long working hours and less wages. Insincere promises are made to them which are never kept. Child labourers feel helpless under the weight of poverty. Their joys of childhood are snatched away by the circumstances of life. Thus, it is a blot on our society. Children are future of a country. If they remain uneducated, the country will never progress. So child labour must be removed from the society. Free education should be provided to poor children to motivate their parents to send them to school. The government should come forward with some schemes for the upliftment of the poor

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and unemployed which will take away the burden of earning from the shoulders of poor children. Child labour must be eradicated.

Q. 3. Most of us do not raise our voice against injustice in our society and tend to remain mute spectators. Anees Jung in her story, 'Lost Spring' vividly highlights the miserable life of street children and bangle-makers of Firozabad. She wants us to act. Which qualities does she want the children to develop?

Anees Jung wants the children to become free from the vicious cycle of poverty into which they have fallen due to the middleman, sahkars, and law enforcement officials. She wants them to be bold enough to raise their voice against their oppressors. She wants them to be fearless and optimistic so that they can dream of taking up other occupations, just like Mukesh, who wants to be a motor mechanic. She wants them to become free from their traditional occupation so that they can realise their lives ambitions. She sees the spark of such quality in Mukesh. Who is willing to go to any lengths to become a motor mechanic. She wants some people to help them develop these qualities so they can be free from injustice and exploitation, taking up other respectable and better paying jobs which will improve their financial condition.

- [Lost Spring by Anees Jung - Summary](#)