

“Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood” by Anees Jung

TEXTUAL QUESTION ANSWERS

(From Flamingo Textbook)

Understanding the Text

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

Answer: Saheb is looking for “gold” in the garbage dumps—anything valuable like coins or useful items. He is in Seemapuri, a settlement on the outskirts of Delhi. His family has come from Dhaka, Bangladesh, fleeing poverty and storms.

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

Answer: The author explains it as a tradition in some families to remain barefoot, though she suspects it’s more due to poverty than tradition. Most cannot afford proper footwear.

3. Is Saheb happy working at the tea stall? Explain.

Answer: No, Saheb is not truly happy. Though he now earns ₹800 and gets meals, he has lost his freedom. Earlier, as a ragpicker, he was his own master, but now he works under someone and feels burdened.

4. What makes the city of Firozabad famous?

Answer: Firozabad is famous for its glass-blowing industry, especially for making bangles. It is a traditional and hereditary occupation for many families there.

5. Mention the hazards of working in the glass-blowing industry.

Answer: Workers, including children, work in dark, dingy, hot

furnaces without ventilation. They often lose their eyesight at a young age and suffer from various health issues due to poor working conditions.

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

Answer: Unlike his family, who have accepted bangle-making as fate, Mukesh dares to dream of becoming a motor mechanic. He wants to break free from the tradition and choose a different future.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (SHORT & LONG ANSWERS)

◆ Short Answer Questions (30–50 words)

1. Why does the author call garbage "gold" for the children?

Answer: For children like Saheb, garbage is a source of survival. It may contain coins, reusable items, or sellable waste. For them, it represents hope, opportunity, and a way to earn livelihood.

2. What is the irony in Saheb's name?

Answer: "Saheb-e-Alam" means "Lord of the Universe," but ironically, Saheb is a barefoot ragpicker living in extreme poverty, dependent on garbage for survival.

3. Why have the people of Seemapuri migrated to Delhi?

Answer: They migrated from Dhaka to escape poverty and natural disasters. They came in search of a better life and livelihood in Delhi.

4. What does Anees Jung observe about barefoot children?

Answer: She notes that many children walk barefoot, which is

explained as tradition, but she believes it's due to poverty. Going barefoot has become a symbol of their deprivation.

5. What is the dream of Mukesh?

Answer: Mukesh dreams of becoming a motor mechanic. He wants to learn the trade in a garage and break the cycle of poverty and traditional bangle-making.

6. Why does the author say "the cry of not having money to do anything except carry on the business of making bangles, not even enough to eat, is louder"?

Answer: It reflects the desperate condition of bangle-makers in Firozabad. They are so poor that they are forced to continue in the same occupation just to survive.

7. How are children exploited in the glass industry of Firozabad?

Answer: Children are made to work long hours in hazardous conditions in glass furnaces. They are deprived of education and childhood, often suffering health issues like loss of eyesight.

8. How does Anees Jung describe the working conditions in glass furnaces?

Answer: She describes them as dark, dingy cells without air or light. The heat is intense, and the conditions are hazardous, leading to health problems among workers.

9. Why can't the bangle-makers of Firozabad organize themselves into cooperatives?

Answer: Fear of police and lack of awareness keep them from organizing. They are trapped in a system of exploitation by middlemen, politicians, and bureaucrats.

10. What social evil is highlighted through “Lost Spring”?

Answer: The chapter highlights child labour, poverty, and the denial of basic rights like education and freedom to poor children, especially in marginalized communities.

◆ Long Answer Questions (120–150 words)

11. Describe the life of ragpickers in Seemapuri.

Answer: The ragpickers in Seemapuri lead a life of poverty and marginalization. They live in makeshift huts without proper sanitation or electricity. Garbage is their only source of livelihood—children scavenge through dumps hoping to find something valuable. Though they live in terrible conditions, they have made peace with their situation, as it is better than starvation in their native lands. Education and dreams are luxuries they cannot afford. Their lives are a constant struggle for food and survival.

12. How is the story “Lost Spring” a commentary on the condition of street children in India?

Answer: The story presents a harsh reality of millions of street children who are denied basic rights like education and play. Children like Saheb work in garbage dumps, and others like Mukesh are trapped in exploitative family trades. Poverty forces them into child labour, stripping them of their childhood and dreams. The story critiques social apathy, systemic failure, and exploitation, making it a strong commentary on how children’s potential is wasted due to economic and social inequalities.

13. What contrast does the author draw between Saheb and Mukesh?

Answer: Saheb is a ragpicker who has accepted his condition, though he dreams of a better life. His choices are limited, and his job at the tea stall reduces his freedom. Mukesh, on the other hand, dares to dream and take control of his future. He wants to become a motor mechanic and is determined to learn the trade. While Saheb is symbolic of lost dreams, Mukesh represents hope and resilience.

14. What is the central theme of "Lost Spring"?

Answer: The central theme is the loss of childhood due to poverty and societal neglect. It focuses on child labour, economic disparity, and the cyclical nature of poverty. The story also explores the human spirit that continues to dream despite harsh realities.

15. How does Anees Jung use the title "Lost Spring" metaphorically?

Answer: "Spring" symbolizes youth, hope, and freshness. "Lost Spring" refers to the lost childhood of poor children who are forced into labour. Their formative years are spent in struggle rather than learning or playing. The metaphor evokes sympathy and highlights the tragedy of stolen childhoods.

16. Explain how Saheb's life changes after he takes up work at the tea stall.

Answer: Initially, Saheb is a free-spirited ragpicker, but after taking a job at the tea stall, he loses his independence. Though he earns a steady income and food, he now works under a boss. His name tag and uniform become symbols of lost freedom. He feels burdened and trapped.

17. Discuss the role of tradition in keeping the bangle-makers in poverty.

Answer: In Firozabad, generations have been engaged in bangle-making, believing it is their destiny. The weight of tradition discourages change. Parents teach the same trade to their children, who grow up accepting it as their only option. This mindset, combined with lack of education and systemic exploitation, traps them in perpetual poverty.

18. How does the system exploit the poor bangle-makers in Firozabad?

Answer: Middlemen, moneylenders, politicians, and bureaucrats exploit the bangle-makers. They control the trade, forcing poor families to work at low wages. Fear and lack of unity prevent these workers from fighting for their rights. The system thrives on their ignorance and helplessness.

19. Why does Mukesh stand out in the crowd of bangle-makers?

Answer: Mukesh stands out because he dares to dream beyond bangle-making. Unlike others, he wants to become a motor mechanic. His ambition reflects courage and determination to break the cycle of poverty and tradition.

20. What solutions does the author suggest, either directly or indirectly, to help children like Saheb and Mukesh?

Answer: Though not stated directly, the author suggests that education, awareness, and breaking the chain of exploitation are key solutions. Empowering children with skills, creating alternative employment opportunities, and government intervention could help such children live a better life.