THE LOST SPRING by Anees Jung  
  
Short answer question. 30-40 words:

1. Who was Saheb? What was the irony in his name?
2. “Promises like mine, abound in every corner of his bleak world”. Explain.
3. What does survival mean for the people of Seemapuri?
4. Why does garbage have different meaning for children and adults?
5. Is Saheb satisfied being a rag-picker?
6. What does Saheb do after leaving rag-picking?
7. What is Mukesh’s dream? How does he plan to fulfil it?
8. Why did Mukesh and his brother know only bangle making?
9. “Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to light outside”. Who are ‘they’? Why is their condition so?
10. “It is his *karam*, his destiny” who says these words and why?
11. Why can’t people living in Firozabad organise themselves into a cooperation?
12. What are the two distinct worlds in Firozabad/
13. Few airplanes fly over Firozabad. Comment.

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Long answer questions. 120-150 words.

1. Describe the circumstances which keep the workers in the bangle industry in abject poverty?
2. “Saheb is no longer his own master”. Comment.
3. How is Saheb’s attitude different from Mukesh’s?

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ANSWER KEY  
  
Short answers

1. Saheb was a rag picker. His full name was Saheb-e-Alam. His name meant ‘Lord of the universe’ but he spent his days scrounging garbage. This was the irony of his name.
2. The narrator, Anees Jung, had told Saheb that he could go to a school when the narrator opened one. These kinds of blank promises were abundant in lives of the ill-informed who saw hope in false pretences.
3. All people living in Seemapuri were rag-pickers and squatter who had emigrated from Bangladesh in 1971. Survival in Seemapuri was rag-picking. Children as well as adults were engaged in this practice.
4. Garbage was the life bread of the people of Seemapuri. For the adults it meant just that, a means to earn a living. However, for the children, garbage represented endless possibilities, each more promising than the last. They hoped to find treasures in the garbage, like a ten-rupee note.
5. Yes, Saheb was satisfied being a rag-picker. For him garbage was full of hope, of finding money. He enjoyed watching tennis and felt happy when the watchman allowed him to use the swing.
6. After leaving rag-picking, Saheb joined a tea stall as a worker, where he was paid ₹800 and fed all meals. However, Saheb wasn’t as happy there as he was rag-picking. He had lost his freedom and the tea canister seemed heavier than the plastic bag. He was no longer his own master
7. Mukesh’s dream is to drive a car one day. He is very optimistic about it and has a plan to accomplish it. He wants to work at a garage a motor mechanic where he would be able to drive at times. Although the garage is very far from his house, he is determined to walk to it.
8. The bangle makers of Firozabad lived in dingy quarters with stinking lanes, choked with garbage. Their homes were the remains of crumbling walls, wobble doors, crowded with humans and animals co-existing in a primeval state.
9. Mukesh’s father was a hard working man. Despite his long struggle and hard labour, first as a tailor and then as a bangle maker, he couldn’t renovate his house or send Mukesh and his brother to school. All he could do was to teach them what he knew of the art of bangle making. And this was why Mukesh and his brother knew nothing else.
10. Mukesh’s grandmother says these words regarding Mukesh’s father. She believes that it was their destiny to work as bangle makers as they were born in that caste. Most people of Firozabad accept bangle making as their ‘destiny’.
11. All inhabitants of Firozabad were engaged in bangle making. ‘They’ refers to these bangle makers. Their eyes were more adjusted to the dark than the light outside as they worked in small congested rooms without any light and ventilation near hot furnaces, welding the glass. Many of them lost their eyesight before they entered adulthood.
12. People living in Firozabad can’t organise themselves into cooperatives as they had fallen into a vicious circle of middlemen who had trapped their ancestors. If they tried to get organised, they were tortured by the police and wrongfully charged of being illegal and put behind the bars.
13. The two distinct worlds in Firozabad are- one of the families of bangle makers, crushed by the stigma of caste in which they were born and the other one, a vicious circle of *sahukars,* middlemen, policemen, law makers, bureaucrats and politicians.
14. This statement aims to establish how distant Firozabad was from the rest of the world. Even though Mukesh aims of driving a car, he has no such hopes regarding planes. This is because the area of Firozabad has seen very few things outside of their bangle making, planes being one of them.

Long Answers:

1. The narrator was told a story by a man from Udipi about a young boy who would go to school past an old temple. His father was priest and the boy would stop for a while at the temple to pray for a pair of shoes, when he finally got them, he prayed that he should never lose them. 30 years after this incident, the young boys, like the priest’s son, wore socks and shoes but many other children like the rag pickers in Seemapuri remained shoeless. It is believed that being barefoot as the tradition of the country, but it could also be an excuse to ignore the perpetual state of poverty in which most of the rag-pickers lived. The relevance of the story is that shoes which are a necessity could be a rare treat for slum children. Saheb felt content even with his worn out tennis shoes that someone else had thrown away.
2. Saheb was amongst the many illegal squatters of Seemapuri who had emigrated from Bangladesh in 1971. The community of these immigrants was composed of rag-pickers who picked through garbage to look for recyclables and other re-saleable material. Everyone, from the children to the adults, was involved in the practice. Saheb too, would go around with a plastic bag on his back, collecting garbage. He was free and was in some ways ‘Lord of the universe’, his own universe. Garbage picking was an early morning job after which Saheb had ample time to watch tennis matches from the gate and play on the swings. After he joined the tea stall, he had a constant income and was sufficiently fed but he was bound by hours that were not his own. He had to follow orders and he was ‘no longer his own master’.
3. The workers in the bangle industry live in abject poverty. The families spent generations working around furnaces in difficult circumstances. They lived in dingy cells, often losing the brightness of their eyes. People like Mukesh’s father tried hard, toiled hard, to move out of their lineage. Despite long years of hard work as a tailor and then a bangle-maker, he couldn’t provide anything for his family. Education or renovation. What he could do was teach them the art of bangle-making. People accept bangle-making as their destiny. Born in the caste of bangle makers, children and adults are engaged in a trade which robs their eyesight and steals them off their ability to organise themselves into cooperatives. If they dare do something different, they are tormented by the law makers and law keepers alike. All these forces coerce them to remain in a trade which gives them nothing but poor health and ties them in a vicious circle of poverty.