



LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q1. What are the dreams of the poor like 'Saheb-e-Alam' and Mukesh? Could these be realised? What is the reality of the situation?

Ans: Poor rag-pickers like Saheb spend the early years of their lives looking for gold in garbage dumps. The parents of these street children have no fixed income. They wage war against poverty and hunger. They have no dreams except finding the means of survival. Garbage to them is gold. It is the source of their daily bread and provides a roof over their heads. He ends up as a servant at a tea-stall and loses his freedom.

Mukesh, the son of a poor bangle-maker of Firozabad, has a dream of becoming a motor mechanic. He wants to learn to drive a car. He thinks of joining a garage to fulfil his dream. He knows that the garage is far away, yet he has decided to walk. He realises the reality and is willing to overcome the obstacles. His daring to rise and decision to get free from the trap laid by vicious moneylenders and middle men arouse a sense of hope. Deprived of education, proper food and upbringing, these children are forced into labour early in life.

Q2. Firozabad presents a strange paradox. Contrast the beauty of the glass bangles of Firozabad with the misery of the people who produce them.

Ans: Firozabad, the centre of India's glass-blowing industry, is famous for its bangles. Spirals of bangles of various colours can be seen lying in mounds in yards or piled on four wheeled push carts. These bangles have shining bright colours: sunny gold, paddy green, royal blue, pink, purple-in fact, every colour born out of the seven colours of the rainbow.

The banglemakers lead a miserable life. They know no other work than bangle making. They have neither courage nor money to start another trade or job. They have spent generations in the clutches of middle men and moneylenders. Extreme poverty forces them to remain hungry and yet work all day. The elderly woman, who works with Savita, has not enjoyed even one full meal in her entire lifetime. Her husband has made a house for the family to live in. He has achieved what many have failed in their lifetime. Mukesh's father has failed to renovate a house or send his two sons to school. Young boys are as tired as their fathers. Their work at hot furnaces makes them blind prematurely.

Q3. (i) "Survival in Seemapuri means rag-picking."

(ii) "Garbage to them is gold."

(iii) "For the children it (garbage) is wrapped in wonder, for the elders it is a means of survival."

In the light of the above remarks write an account of the life and activities of the ragpickers settled in Seemapuri (Delhi).

Or

Give a brief account of the life and activities of the Bangladeshi squatters like Saheb-e-Alam settled in Seemapuri.

Ans: Seemapuri is a place on the periphery of Delhi, yet miles away from it metaphorically. Squatters who came from Bangladesh way back in 1971 live here. Saheb's family is one of them. Seemapuri was then a wilderness. It still is, but it is no longer empty. Nearly 10,000

ragpickers live there in structures of mud, with roofs of tin and tarpaulin. These shanties are devoid of sewage, drainage or running water. These people have lived there for more than thirty years without an identity or permit. They have got ration cards that enable them to buy grains and get their names on voters' lists. For them food is more important for survival than an identity. The women put on tattered saris. They left their fields as they gave them no grain. They pitch their tents wherever they find food. Ragpicking is the sole means of their survival. It has acquired the proportions of a fine art for them. Garbage to them is gold. It provides them their daily bread and a roof over the heads. Most of the barefoot ragpickers roam the streets early in the morning and finish their activities by noon. They seem to carry the plastic bag lightly over their shoulders. They are clothed in discoloured shirts and shorts and denied the opportunity of schooling.

Q4. "The cry of not having money to do anything except carry on the business of making bangles, not even enough to eat, rings in every home. The young men echo the lament of their elders. Little has moved with time, it seems, in Firozabad." Comment on the hardships of the banglemakers of Firozabad with special emphasis on the forces that conspire against them and obstruct their progress.

Ans: The bangle-makers of Firozabad are born in poverty, live in poverty and die in poverty. For generations these people have been engaged in this trade—working around hot furnaces with high temperature, welding and soldering glass to make bangles. In spite of hard labour throughout the day, the return is meagre. Some of them have to sleep with empty, aching stomachs. Others do not have enough to eat. Whatever they do get is not delicious or nourishing.

The stinking lanes of their shanty town are choked with garbage. Their hovels have crumbling walls, wobbly doors and no windows. These are overcrowded with humans and animals.

Poverty and hunger, social customs and traditions, stigma of caste and the intrigues of powerful lobby that thrives on their labour combine to keep them poor, uneducated and hungry. The moneylenders, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats and the politicians—all are ranged against them. Children are engaged in illegal and hazardous work. Years of mind-numbing toil have killed all initiative and ability to dream. They are unable to organise themselves into cooperative due to lack of a leader and fear of ill-treatment at the hands of the police. They seem to carry the burden that they can't put down. They can talk but not act to improve their lot.

Q5. Compare and contrast the two families of bangle-sellers portrayed in 'Lost Spring.' Comment on the roles of individuals in highlighting the issues raised by the author.

Ans: One of the families is that of Mukesh's. It comprises three males and two females: Mukesh, his brother, their father, their grandmother and the wife of Mukesh's elder brother. The grandmother had watched her own husband go blind with the dust from polishing the glass of bangles. Mukesh's father is a poor old bangle maker, who has failed to renovate a house and send his two sons to school. Mukesh and his brother make bangles. The wife of Mukesh's brother is a traditional daughter-in-law who follows the customs and cooks food for the family. The grandmother believes in destiny and caste. Only Mukesh shows some sparks of fighting the system and declares that he wants to be a motor mechanic. Savita, the elderly woman and her old, bearded husband form the other family. Young and innocent Savita works mechanically. The elderly woman highlights the plight of bangle makers who fail to enjoy even one full meal during the entire lifetime. The old man has

an achievement to his credit. He has made a house for the family to live in. He has a roof over his head. The lifestyle, problems and economic conditions of the two families are similar. There is only a difference of degree but not of kind in their existence and response to life's problems.

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