

**A.B.M. College, Golmuri**

**English Core**

**I.A. & I.Com.**

**By Manish Prabhakar Singh**

**The Lost Spring**

- **Anees Jung**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Anees Jung is an Indian author, journalist and columnist for newspapers in India and abroad, whose most known work, *Unveiling India* (1987) was a chronicle of the lives of women in India, noted especially for the depiction of Muslim women behind the purdah.

Born in Rourkela, Anees hails from an aristocratic family in Hyderabad – her father, Nawab HoshYar Jung, was a renowned scholar and poet, and served as the musahib (adviser) to the last Nizam (prince) of Hyderabad State. Her mother and brother are also Urdu poets. After schooling and college at Osmania University in Hyderabad, she went to the United States for higher studies at University of Michigan Ann Arbor, where she did her Masters in Sociology and American.

## SUMMARY

The lost spring focuses on the lost childhood and poverty faced by children. It focuses on the story of Saheb-e-alam and Mukesh and it portrays how dreams sometimes die from within. 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.

❖ Sometimes I find a rupee in the garbage:-

The author comes across Saheb every morning in her neighbourhood looking for treasure in the garbage heaps. His family migrated from Dhaka so long ago that he doesn't even have any distant memories of it. His mother had said their fields and home had been swept away by the frequent storms. Thus, they now live in the big city hoping to make a fortune and for livelihood. To the author's query on why he digs the garbage, Saheb replied he had nothing else to do. The author suggested he should go to school but Saheb replied there was none in the neighbourhood and that he would surely go if it built there. The writer jokingly said she would build one without thinking, even for once, that Saheb would take it seriously. He came to her a few days later to ask whether her school was ready. She felt ashamed of her false promise.

Having been well acquainted with Saheb, the author asked his name. He told her it was Saheb-e-Alam which, though not known to him. Saheb-e-Alam meant "lord of the universe". Even if he had known he probably would never have believed. With a group of other bare footed boys, Saheb roamed the streets, appearing in the morning like the birds and disappearing at noontime.

The author recognized each one of them. She asked one of them why he wasn't wearing slippers. Then he simply answered that his mother did not get it down from the shelf. Another quickly added in that he would throw it off even if his mother had brought it down. Still another expressed his desire for a pair of shoes because he had never owned one. The author during her travels across the country observed that numerous children walked barefoot on the village and city roads. She learnt that it was not always lack of money but a tradition to remain barefoot.

The author recalls a story told her by a man who happened to be son of a priest. As a young school going boy he would often pray in the temple for a pair of shoes. Thirty years later, the author herself visited Udipi and the deserted temple there. She saw the house of the present priest and his young son dressed in school uniform complete with shoes and socks. She remembered the other boy's prayer to God on having received a pair of shoes. He had prayed that he might never lose them. The boy's prayer was answered but the cities are still full of rag pickers moving barefoot all their life.

The author takes us to the outskirts of Delhi to a place called Seemapuri. Though situated on the periphery of Delhi, it is not even distantly connected to the capital city in any respect. Saheb's family and

many others like had migrated from Bangladesh in 1971. Once a wilderness, Seemapuri now has numerous structures of mud with tin or tarpaulin roof without any amenities of health or hygiene.

Ten thousand rag pickers dwell in this place with nothing but a ration card which entitles to enlist them in voter's list as well as to buy grain. They did not come looking for identity but food for their stomach. That is why they had to leave their land of fields and rivers which so often drove them to starvation. In Seemapuri, rag picking seemed the only occupation which through generations has become an art in itself. Their livelihood comes from it, along with their daily bread and a roof over their heads. For the children, it was even more than mere livelihood.

Saheb disclosed that sometimes they find even a ten rupee note in the garbage. Such prized catches goad them to keeping digging in the hope for finding more. The garbage heaps hold different meanings for the children and the elders. For the elders, it is a means of earning a living while for children it was like a wonderful discovery when they find currency notes in the heaps. On morning in winter the author saw Saheb standing by a fenced gate of a neighbourhood club looking at two young men in the tennis court. Saheb admitted he liked the game but had to be content watching it from outside the gate. He even disclosed that the gatekeeper permits him to get in when no one is around and allows him to play on the swing. He explained that the tennis shoes he was wearing were given by someone. That is used and disposed of by somebody else did not bother him at all. It was a blessing for a boy who had walked barefoot till then. However, the tennis game that interested him so much would always remain out of his reach. Later, Saheb was employed at a tea stall. Besides salary for his job he also got his meals for free. Though he found a job but he was not happy. He lost his carefree ways. He had the responsibility of a job but was no longer his own master.

## 2. I want to drive a car:-

“Mukesh Insists On Being.....For All The Women In The Land It Seems.

Unlike Saheb, Mukesh did not want to work under anyone. He desired to be his own master. He announced he would be a motor mechanic. He was determined and could almost visualise his dream. He hailed from Firozabad where the bangle making has passed on from generation to generation. Families sat around the furnaces, welding glass and making bangles for all the women in the country.

Mukesh's family was also into the same occupation without any idea about the illegalities of child labour and the offence of putting children in such hazardous work places. Mukesh proudly took the author to his home through stinking lanes obstructed with heaps of garbage and broken down shackles where humans and animals coexisted.

His house was a half built hovel. Inside on a firewood stove was placed a large vessel of boiling spinach leaves. A thin young woman, Mukesh's sister in law, was cooking dinner for the entire family. She smiled

at the writer but withdrew behind a wall as her father in law (Mukesh's father) arrived. Except from teaching his boys the art of bangle making, Mukesh's father could not accomplish anything more in life.

Mukesh's grandmother, who had seen her husband go blind from the dust of glass, accepted it as her destiny and remarked that the family lineage of bangle making could not be broken as it was god given lineage. Being born to a caste of bangle makers, they could not think of a livelihood beyond that. Surrounded by heaps of colourful bangles lying in their dirty yards, young men push hand carts laden with them along the narrow lanes of the shanty town. Parents and children sit in the dark hutments besides the flickering flames giving shape and colour to the glass circles. Their eyes seem more accustomed to darkness than the natural light outside. Most of them gradually lose their eyesight.

A young girl in a faded pink dress works on bangles along with her grandmother, the author wonders whether Savita, the young girl even realizes the significance of the coloured bangles. It is a symbol of an Indian women's married status and thus regarded very sacred. She would perhaps realise it one day when she would become a bride. The old woman beside her also a young bride once and still had the bangles, though lost her eyesight. In all her life she had not had a proper meal. Her husband could provide them nothing but only a shelter to live in.

The remark of the old man makes one wonder if he has achieved something which, some others could not do in their lifetime. He gave his family a roof over their heads.

The plight was universal; every home wallowed in the same misery. The young speak the similar words of woe as their fathers. Nothing seemed to have changed in Firozabad and the miserable drudgery and toil suppressed and killed their initiative and even the ability to dream.

The author suggested formation of cooperatives to escape the vicious circle of middlemen who have always forced and exploited them. The bangle makers told about their helplessness because, whenever they attempted to unite and form a cooperative, They were victimized and tortured by the police who were hand in glove with the middle men. There was none to lead them and thus their lives were condemned to poverty and injustice.

The author could visualise two worlds here one was that of perennial sufferings to which the bangle makers belonged and the other was that of the nexus between middlemen, the police, bureaucrats and politicians. Both the worlds have burdened the young shoulder with the baggage he cannot put down. They accept the burden as naturally as their fathers had done. Defiance or deviation was nowhere seen. It was only in Mukesh that a spark of dare was seen. He was bent on becoming a motor mechanic and would even learn to drive. He was ready to walk to the garage which was far from his home. He did not dream of flying an airplane but was content with his dream of cars that seemed more real to him. Moreover they had seen very few planes flying over Firozabad.

## ❖ MAIN CHARACTERS:

1. Saheb-e-Alam: A rag picker

2. Mukesh: Son of a bangle maker

❖ The main two protagonists of the chapter, Saheb-e-Alam and Mukesh don't live their childhood as they have to carry the burden of poverty and illiteracy. In their miserable stories of exploitation, the author provides glimpses of fortitude and resilience.

## QUESTIONS:-

1. Write the analysis of the lesson Lost Spring?

Answer- Spring is the season of bloom. Spring is a metaphor of childhood and is associated with every child at the beginning of a bright future. Childhood is associated with innocence, physical stamina and vitality. It is also the stage for gaining skill and knowledge, learning and going to school.

'Lost Spring' by Anees Jung is a description of those poor children who are condemned to poverty and a life of exploitation. The two protagonists of the chapter, Saheb-e-Alam and Mukesh, lose their childhood while carrying the burden of poverty and illiteracy. In their bleak stories of exploitation, the author finds glimpses of resilience and hope.

In this story, the author unveils the utter destitution of the rag pickers of Seemapuri and the bangle makers of Firozabad. This story describes the grinding poverty and traditions that compel the children to live a life of exploitation.

'Lost Spring' describes two stories of stolen childhood. Millions of children in India, instead of spending their days in schools and playgrounds waste their childhood in rag picking or hazardous industries. Childhood is the spring of life. But millions of unfortunate children like Saheb and Mukesh waste this spring either scrounging in the garbage dumps of Seemapuri or welding glass bangles in the blast furnaces of Firozabad. Their childhood is lost to the demands of survival. Hence, the title is quite apt.

2. Write a short character sketch of Saheb the rag picker.

Answer - Saheb-e-alam was a rag-picker who lived in Seemapuri. His family had migrated from Dhaka, Bangladesh to India in 1971 with the hope of finding better life conditions. Every morning he roamed about streets collecting garbage. Many other boys also accompanied him. His family lived in miserable conditions. He could not afford to go to school. He did not have even a pair of slippers to wear. He wished to play lawn tennis which was beyond his reach. He also found a job at a tea-stall where he ran various errands for the tea-stall owner. Though he earned rupees eight hundred monthly along with

meals every day, yet he was not happy working there. His rag-picking bag was lighter than the canister. He was his own master; but now he had to work under someone.

Q1. What is Saheb looking for in the garbage dumps? Where is he and where has he come from?

Ans. Saheb is looking for gold in the garbage dumps. He is in the neighbourhood of the author. Saheb has come from Bangladesh. He came with his mother in 1971. His house was set amidst the green fields of Dhaka. Storms swept away their fields and homes. So they left the country.

Q2. What explanations does the author offer for the children not wearing footwear?

Ans. One explanation offered by the author is that it is a tradition to stay barefoot. It is not lack of money. He wonders if this is only an excuse to explain away a perpetual state of poverty. He also remembers the story of a poor boy who prayed to the goddess for a pair of shoes.

Q3. Is Saheb happy working at the tea-stall? Explain.

Ans. No, Saheb is not happy working at the tea-stall. He is no longer his own master. His face has lost the carefree look. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulder. The bag was his. The canister belongs to the man who owns the tea-shop.

Q4. What makes the city of Firozabad famous?

Ans. The city of Firozabad is famous for its bangles. Every other family in Firozabad is engaged in making bangles. It is the centre of India's glass-blowing industry. Families have spent generations working around furnaces, welding glass, making bangles for the women in the land.

Q5. How, in your opinion, can Mukesh realize his dream?

Ans. Mukesh is the son of a poor bangle-maker of Firozabad. Most of the young men of Firozabad have no initiative or ability to dream, but Mukesh is an exception. He has the capacity to take courage and break from the traditional family occupation. He has strong will power also. He does not want to be a pawn in the hands of the middlemen or moneylenders. He insists on being his own master by becoming a motor mechanic.

He can realize his dream by joining a garage and learn the job of repairing cars and driving them. He will have to overcome many hurdles before he succeeds. Then comes transport problem. Money is the first one. He will have to earn some money himself. The garage is a long way from his home. He will have to cover it twice everyday anyhow—by walking on foot. Patience, hard work, strong will and the determination to learn will help him realize his dream.

Q6. Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry.

Ans. The glass bangles industry has many health hazards. It usually employs small children. It is illegal to employ very young children in hazardous industries, but certain forces like ! middlemen, moneylenders, police and politicians combine to entrap the poor workers. Let us first consider the places where bangle makers work. It is a cottage industry. They work in the glass furnaces with high temperatures. The dingy cells are without air and light. Boys and girls work hard during day next to lines of flames of flickering oil lamps.

They weld pieces of coloured glass into circles of bangles. Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to the light outside. That's why, they often end up losing their eyesight before they become adults. Glass blowing, welding and soldering pieces of glass are all health hazards. Even the dust from polishing the bangles adversely affects the eyes and even the adults go blind. Thus, the surroundings, prevailing conditions and the type of job involved-all prove risky to the health of the workers.