

## THE LOST SPRING

-ANEES JUNG

Lost Spring" analyses the plight (conditions) of street children who are forced into labour early in life and denied the opportunity of schooling. Thus, it mainly talks about the grinding poverty and traditions which condemn these children to a life of exploitation.

### Introduction

The story, "Lost Spring" describes the pitiable condition of poor children who have been forced to miss the joy of childhood due to the socio-economic condition that prevails in this man-made world. These children are denied the opportunity of schooling and forced into labour early in life. Anees Jung gives voice to eliminate child labour by educating the children and to enforce the laws against child labour by the government strictly. The call is to end child exploitation and let the children enjoy the days of the spring that bring joy under their feet.

### Brief Summary

**I – Sometimes I find a rupee in the garbage.** The first part tells the writer's impressions about the life of the poor rag pickers. The rag pickers have migrated from Dhaka and found a settlement in Seemapuri. Their fields and homes had been swept away by storms. They had come to the big city to find a living. They are poor. The writer watches Saheb every morning scrounging for "gold" in her neighbourhood. Garbage is a means of survival for the elders and for the children it is something wrapped in wonder. The children come across a coin or two from it. These people have desires and ambitions, but they do not know the way to achieve them. There are quite a few things that are unreachable to them, namely shoes, tennis and the like. Later Saheb joins a tea stall where he could earn 800 Rupees and all the meals. The job has taken away his freedom.

### II – I want to drive a car.

The second part deals with the life of Mukesh, who belongs to the family of Bangle-makers. Firozabad is best known for its glass-blowing industry. Nearly 20,000 children are engaged in this business and the law that forbids child labour is not known here. The living condition and the working environment is a woeful tale. Life in dingy cells and working close to hot furnaces make these children blind when they step into the adulthood. Weighed down by the debt, they can neither think nor find a way to come out of this trap. The politicians, middlemen, policemen and bureaucrats all obstruct their way to progress. The women in the household consider it as their fate and just follow the tradition. Mukesh is different from the rest of them there. He dreams to become a motor mechanic. The garage is far away from his house but he will walk to realise his dream.

**Gist of the lesson:**

Sometimes I find a rupee in garbage

- The author examines and analyses the impoverished conditions and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation these children are denied education and are forced into hardships early in their lives.
- The writer encounters Saheb – a rag picker whose parents have left behind the life of poverty in Dhaka to earn a living in Delhi.
- His family like many other families of rag pickers lives in Seemapuri. They do not have any identification other than a ration card.
- The children do not go to school and they are excited at the prospect of finding a coin or even a ten rupee note for rummaging in the garbage.
- It is the only way of earning -live in impoverished conditions - resigned to their fate.
- The writer is pained to see Saheb, a rag picker whose name means the “lord of the universe”, lose the spark of childhood and roams barefoot with his friends.
- From morning to noon the author encounters him in a tea stall - is paid Rs. 800 He sadly realizes that he is no longer his own master and this loss of freedom weighs heavily on his tender shoulders.
- The author then tells about another victim, Mukesh who wants to be a motor mechanic.
- Hailing from Firozabad, the centre of India’s bangle making and glass blowing industry, he has always seen every one work in the glass making industry.
- His family like the others there, doesn’t not know that it is illegal for children to work in such close proximity to furnaces, in such high temperatures.
- They are exposed to various health hazards like losing their eyesight as they work in abysmal conditions, in dark and dingy cells.
- They lead a hand to mouth existence as they are caught in the vicious web of the money lenders, middlemen, police and traditions
- So burdened are the bangle makers of Firozabad that they have lost their ability to dream unlike Mukesh who dreams of driving a car.

## **Word Meaning**

1. Scrounging – searching for
2. Amidst – in the middle of
3. Mutters – to speak in a low voice
4. Glibly - speaking or spoken in a confident way, but without careful thought or honesty
5. Hollow – meaningless
6. Embarrassed - feeling ashamed
7. abound - exist in large numbers
8. bleak – empty
9. Shuffles - slides them over each other
10. perpetual state of poverty - never ending condition of being poor
11. Desolation - the state of being empty
12. Panting - taking short and quick breathes
13. Acquaintance - contact
14. periphery- outer area
15. metaphorically–symbolically
16. squatters - a person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land
17. wilderness- a wasteland
18. tarpaulin- waterproof cloth
19. Permits – legal documents
20. Tattered – torn
21. Transit homes – a temporary home

22. looking straight into my eyes – with confidence and determination
23. looms like a mirage - seems that it will be true in the future but actually it will not be so
24. amidst – in the middle of
25. glass-blowing industry - industry related to making glass
26. furnaces - a closed room or container where heat is produced
27. welding - the process of joining metal or glass pieces by heating them
28. Dingy – dark, dim
29. Slog – work hard
30. Daylight hours - hours of the day when there is sunlight
31. Brightness of their eyes - here, refers to the power to see
32. Beam – shine brightly
33. Volunteers - freely offers to do something
34. Stinking – bad smell
35. Choked – blocked
36. Crumbling – falling down
37. Wobbly – unsteady
38. Coexisting - present at the same time and place
39. Primeval – prehistoric
40. Bangs – hits
41. Thatched – covered with dry grass
42. Vessel – container for cooking food
43. Sizzling - make a hissing sound when frying or cooking

44. Platters – large plates
45. Chopped – cut finely
46. Frail – thin, weak
47. eyes filled with smoke - her eyes are filled with the smoke coming out of the firewood stove
48. command respect - she is worthy and so, is respected
49. Withdraws – goes back
50. Veil - a piece of fine material worn by women to protect or hide the face, cover or hide
51. Impoverished – very poor
52. Labour – hard work
53. Renovate – repair
54. Destiny – fate
55. God-given lineage - here, a profession carried on through the generations of a family – glass bangle making
56. Yard – the open area at the back of the house
57. Mounds – heaps
58. Unkempt – not taken care of
59. Piled – kept one on top of the other
60. Shanty town - a town that is full of small, roughly built huts
61. Welding – joining
62. Drab – faded, colourless
63. Soldering – joining
64. Tongs - an instrument with two moveable arms joined at one end
65. Sanctity - the state of being sacred or holy
66. Auspiciousness – good omen

67. Ser – a unit of measuring quantity
68. Reaped – received as a benefit
69. Rings – a sound which is repeated
70. Echo – repeat
71. Lament – complaint
72. Mind – numbing – boring
73. Toil – physical hard work done to earn
74. Vicious – cruel
75. Hauled up – dragged, taken away
76. Spiral – here, a never-ending continuous process
77. Apathy – lack of concern
78. Greed – intense and selfish desire for something
79. Distinct – separate
80. Stigma – dishonor
81. Bureaucrats – government officials
82. Imposed – forced upon
83. Baggage – burden
84. To dare – do something courageous
85. Hurling down – moving around

## Questions & Answers

### Q1. Bring out the irony in the name of 'Saheb-e-Alam'?

Ans. Saheb-a Alam means- 'The Lord of Universe' The irony is that he doesn't even have a roof over his head but his name means, the lord of universe.

### Q2. In spite of despair and disease pervading the lives of the slum children, they are not devoid of hope. How far do you agree?

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

### Q3 Does Savita understand the importance of bangles?

Ans- Savita a girl in drab pink dress is too young to understand the significance of the bangles she helps make.

### Q 4. What keeps bangle-makers in the trap?

Ans Irrational adherence to tradition, perpetual poverty, Vicious circle of Sahukar, Police-men, Middlemen, Politicians, etc.

### Q5. 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?

or

### Why had the ragpickers come to live in Seemapuri?

Ans. Saheb's parents belonged to Dhaka in Bangladesh, where they lived amidst green fields. They and the other ragpickers left their homes many years ago and migrated to India in search of a livelihood, as their homes and fields were destroyed in storms. This forced them to come to India, where they settled in the slums of Seemapuri.

### Q6. What job did Saheb take up? Was he happy?

Ans. Saheb took up work at a tea stall, where he had to perform several odd jobs, including getting milk from the milk booth. He was not happy, as he had lost his independence. Though he earned Rs.800, and got all his meals free, he was no longer his own master. The carefree look had vanished from his face.

### Q7. In what sense is garbage gold to the ragpickers?

or

**'Garbage to them is gold'. Why does the author say this about the ragpickers?**

Ans. Garbage is gold to the ragpickers of Seemapuri because it provides them with food and is a means of survival. Moreover, it is gold also because the ragpickers can find coins and currency notes in it.

**Q8. How is Mukesh different from the other bangle makers of Firozabad?**

Ans. Mukesh has the courage to dream big in spite of all adversity, whereas the other bangle makers of Firozabad have resigned to their fate, and have suppressed all their hopes and desires. Mukesh refuses to follow the 'God-given lineage' of bangle making and wants to be a motor mechanic when he grows up.

**Q9. Who does Anees Jung blame for the sorry plight of the bangle makers?**

Ans. Anees Jung blames the middlemen, the policemen, the lawmakers, the bureaucrats and the politicians for the sorry plight of the bangle makers. These people conspire against and exploit the poor bangle makers. They do not let them form co-operatives, and compel their children to join the same trade at an early age.

**Q10. What is Mukesh's dream? Do you think he will be able to fulfil his dream? Why? Why not?**

**or**

**What was Mukesh's dream? In your opinion, did he achieve his dream?**

**or**

**Is it possible for Mukesh to realise his dream? Justify your answer.**

Ans. Mukesh's dream is to become a motor-mechanic. It is no doubt difficult for Mukesh to achieve his dream, as he is torn between his desires and his family tradition, which he cannot escape. Besides, he has to face a number of obstacles in the form of sahkars, middlemen, bureaucrats, law makers, politicians etc. However, his will to work hard, and his strong determination could help him achieve his dream. '

**Q11. Why could the bangle makers not organise themselves into a cooperative?**

Ans. The bangle makers could not organise themselves into a cooperative because they were trapped in the vicious circle of sahkars, middlemen, policemen, bureaucrats and politicians. If they tried to organise themselves, they would be beaten by up the police and put into jail.

**Q12. Mention any two hazards of working in the bangle industry.**

Ans. The glass bangle industry offers a very unhealthy and hazardous environment to the people working in it. They have to work in the glass furnaces with high temperature in dingy cells without air and light. Workers, including child labourers, lose their eyesight at an early age. Slogging for long, relentless hours also has adverse effects on their bodies.

**Q13. Why does the author say that the bangle makers are caught in a vicious web?**

Ans. The bangle makers in Firozabad are exploited at the hands of the Sahukars, middlemen, policemen, law makers, bureaucrats and politicians. They toil day and night, but are not paid appropriate wages and are steeped in poverty. They cannot form cooperatives for their betterment. Moreover, their children are also compelled to join the same trade at an early age and cannot dare to take up any other profession.

**Q14. Is Saheb happy working at the tea stall? How do you know?**

Ans. Saheb is not happy working at the tea stall. He is paid a fixed wage of Rs 800, and also receives all his meals free. But the author notices that his face has lost its carefree look, which makes it evident that he is not happy. He has lost his independence, and is no longer his own master.

**Q15. Give a brief account of life and activities of the people like Saheb-e-Alam settled in Seemapuri.**

Ans. The author's acquaintance with Saheb and other barefoot ragpickers introduced her to Seemapuri. It is a slum area located on the periphery of Delhi. The residents of Seemapuri consist of people who left Bangladesh in the 1971 War and are basically refugees. Saheb's family is among them. The area does not have facilities of sewage, drainage or running water. About 10000 ragpickers live here. Their only means of livelihood is ragpicking, and they treat rags as valuable as gold. These ragpickers have lived here for more than thirty years without any identity. They do not have permits but have ration cards, with which they can get their names on the voter's list.

**Q16. '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?**

Ans 'Lost Spring' metaphorically means stolen childhood... a saga of grinding poverty and traditions to which thousands of people have succumbed. The story revolves around the pitiable condition of poor children who have been forced to live in slums and work hard in dirty conditions. The story is divided into two parts. The first part tells the writer's impression about the life of poor ragpickers who have migrated from Bangladesh, but now have settled in the Seemapuri area of Delhi. The second part narrates the miserable life of the bangle makers in the town of Firozabad. The stark reality of these families is that in spite of back-breaking labour that they put in, they cannot have two square meals a day. Besides, they are victims of exploitation by those above them and also suffer the consequences of blind belief in traditions.

**Q17. The bangle makers of Firozabad make beautiful bangles and make everyone happy but they live and die in squalor. Elaborate.**

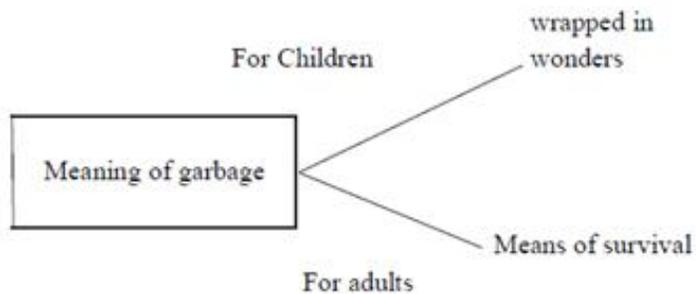
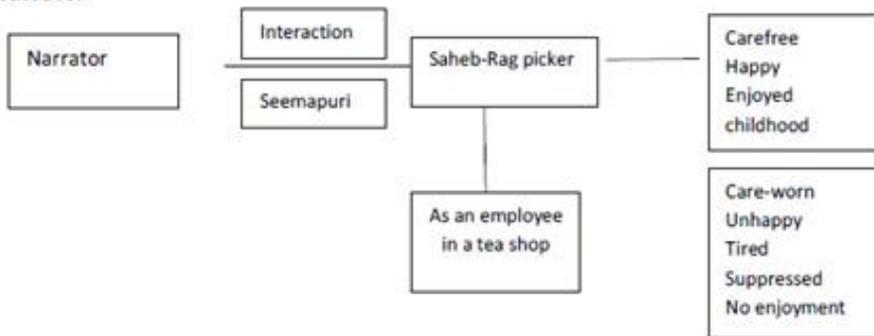
Answer. Firozabad is the hub of India's glass-blowing industry where families have spent generations making bangles. The stark reality of these families is that in spite of the back breaking hard work that they put in, they cannot have two square meals a day. They work in deplorable conditions and many lose their eyesight at an early age. To top it all, they live in unhygienic conditions where there is a lack of basic amenities too. The sad reality is that the workers cannot organise themselves into a cooperative. They are devoid of all enthusiasm and do not dare to dream

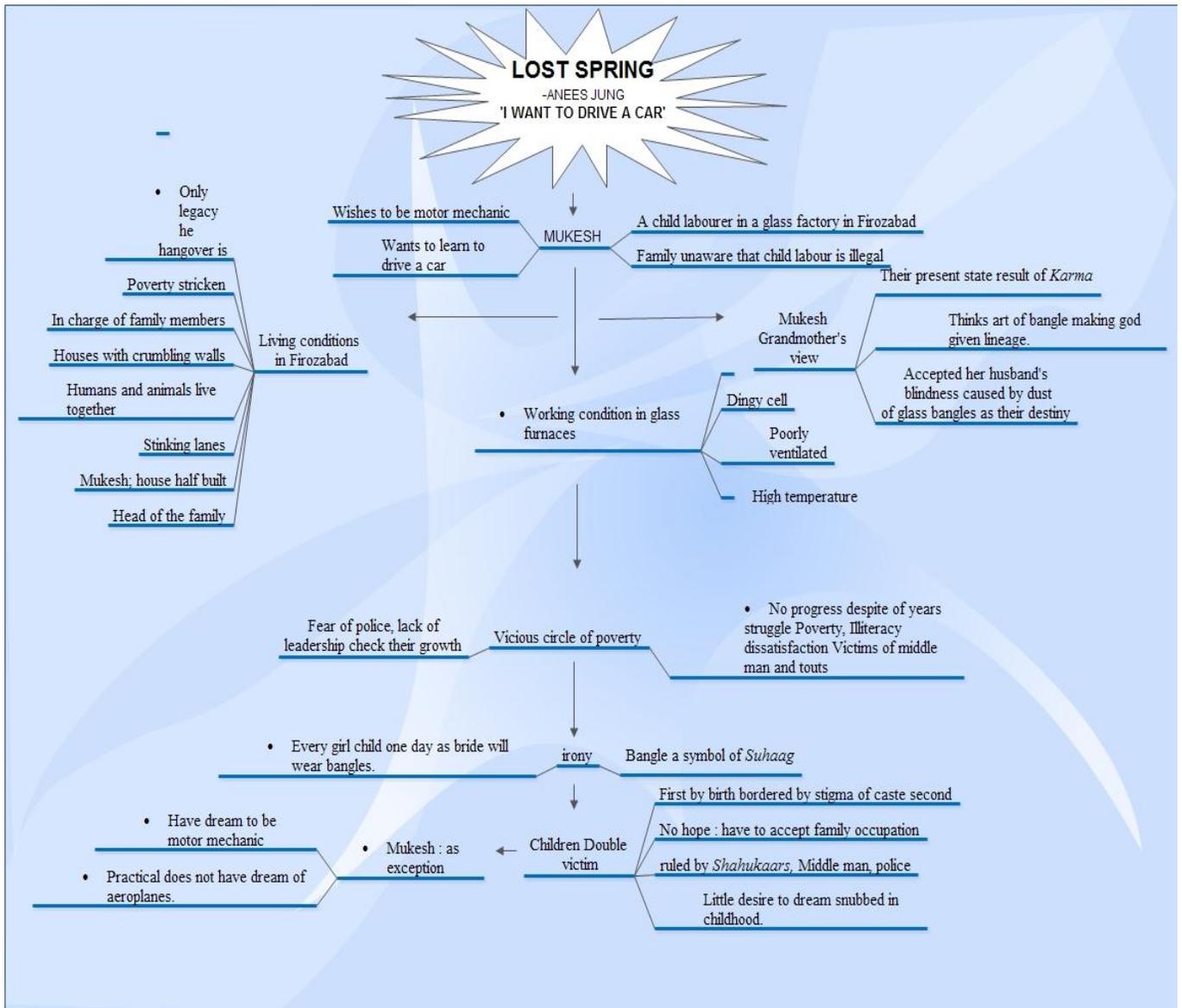
of anything better. The fear of police and lack of leadership among themselves have confined them to a vicious circle of poverty, indifference and greed. Thus, while they bring happiness to everyone's life, their own life is steeped in poverty and squalor.

### Mind-map

Major Features:

1.





Click on the following links for further understanding of the topic:

Lost Spring part 1 <https://youtu.be/XjJtxjuGIC0>

Lost Spring part 2 <https://youtu.be/zoNZz8r2f7A>