

LOST SPRING

Stories of Stolen Childhood

About the Authoress



Anees Jung was born in Rourkela in 1964. She spent her childhood and adolescence in Hyderabad. She is an Indian journalist and columnist for major newspapers in India and abroad and has authored several books. She is famed for her work 'Unveiling India' (1987). The lesson is an

excerpt from her book titled 'Lost Spring, Stories of Stolen Childhood'.

Theme

'Lost Spring' is a fascinating and revelatory description of the plight of street children forced into labour early in life and denied the opportunity of schooling. The callousness of society and the political class to the sufferings of the poor are brought to the forefront. The lesson analyzes the grinding poverty and traditions prevailing in the country. It sensitizes the readers to step forward to save the spring (childhood) of beautiful human life so that many children would be able to avail the opportunities to realize their dreams.

Spring – Metaphor of Life

Spring is the season of merry-making and cheerfulness. Childhood is also a stage of life for merry-making and cheerfulness. But children have become victims of child labour and exploitation, losing their cheerfulness, i.e. childhood. In other words, they have lost their 'spring'. Thus 'Spring' has been used as a Metaphor of Life.



*“Sometimes I find a Rupee in the garbage” –
Saheb-e-Alam. Locale – Seemapuri*

*Anees Jung’s encounter with Saheb – a refugee from
Bangladesh*

*He does rag picking for survival and lives in miserable
unhygienic conditions.*

*Bangladesh refugees have been living in Seemapuri
since 1971, without permits but with only ration
cards.*



Saheb has a dream to go to school that remains unfulfilled. His name is 'Saheb-e-Alam' which means 'lord of the universe'. Ironically, he is a rag picker. He does not wear chappals and says that it is a tradition to remain barefoot. It is basically due to a perpetual state of poverty. He has a dream to wear tennis shoes and play tennis which is out of his reach.

Settlement at Seemapuri



Huts - mud houses, tarpaulin, and tin-roofed, poor sanitation, no safe drinking water, no sewage, compelled to live sub-standard life in slum. Though on the outskirts of Delhi, they are living

a miserable life which is no match with the life in Delhi. They have ration cards to buy grains and are vote banks for politicians but are compelled to lead a poor life.



Both children and elders are rag pickers.

*Garbage hold different meanings:
For elders it is a means of
livelihood.*

But for children it is a gold mine.

*They get surprises – coins and
currency notes . Children are deprived of schooling and
fulfilling their dreams.*

*Through the years , rag picking has acquired the
proportions of a fine art.*



Later Saheb works in a tea stall, earning 800 rupees and all his meals.

He has lost his carefree look. The weight of steel canister is heavier than the plastic bag of rags.

The bag was his. The canister belongs to the tea shop owner. Saheb is no more his own master. He has lost his freedom.

“I want to drive a car” – Mukesh

Locale- FIROZABAD



A child labour in family profession of bangle making at Firozabad. He is daring and different from other young children who have submitted to age-old miseries and traditional profession.

Workers do not even get a square meal a day. Mukesh dreams of becoming a motor mechanic and his own master. He is ready to walk a long way from his home to the garage.

WORKING PLACE



Small huts-dark, no light and poor ventilation, high temperature, full of smoky lanes of their shanty town, stink of garbage, hovels of disintegrating walls, unsteady doors, no windows, narrow lanes,

over crowded with humans and animals.

Thousands of adults and 20,000 children work there risking their eyes and health.

Dust of polishing glass bangles adversely affects their eyes and lungs.

STIGMA OF CASTE



Mukesh's grandmother says that this work is his 'karam', his destiny. It is carried out by the ancestors from longer period of time. They are born in the caste of bangle-makers and seen nothing but bangles. They carry out this work even if they do not get one full meal in their entire lifetime. Their eyes have become more adjusted to the dark than to the light outside. They often end up losing their eyesight.



Savita is a young girl busy in making bangles without even knowing its hidden symbolism of an Indian woman's *suhaag*. She is innocent as she is ignorant about the sanctity of the bangles she helps to make. One day when she will become a bride, she will realize that.

TWO DISTINCT WORLDS

First is of the bangle makers caught in a web of poverty.

Second is of the sahkars, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats and the politicians.

All the profits are bagged by them.

Workers are not allowed to form guilds or worker's union and are beaten and exploited.

They are compelled to lead sub-standard, unhealthy, and deprived life.

Possible hazards - accidents, loss of vision, skin burns, physical and mental weakness and genetic problems due to adverse working conditions.



Mukesh wants to take the initiative to change the family trend of bangle making. He is determined and resolute to become a motor-mechanic come what may in his way. Mukesh had no dreams of soaring too high, like flying a plane, and wants only to be in reality.

We Know Everything

But

We Stay Calm

Are We

Humans

?



THANK YOU