

GURU GOBIND SINGH PUBLIC SCHOOL, CHAS
e-Content & Assignment Week 4

English

Class XII

Flamingo
Chapter 2: Lost Spring

About the author: **ANEES JUNG**- Anees Jung (b. Rourkela 1964), journalist and columnist for major newspapers in India and abroad, whose most noted work, *Unveiling India* (1987) is a detailed chronicle of the lives of women in India, noted especially for the depiction of Muslim women behind the purdah.

Theme: 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. The lesson 'Lost Spring' shares two 'stories of stolen childhood'. The characters and places are different but the problem is the same. Thousands of Sahebs and Mukesh are condemned to live a life of misery and exploitation. Grinding poverty and traditions compel children to work in the most inhuman and hostile conditions.

Justification of the title: '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. The author succeeds in highlighting the plight of such unfortunate children.

CHAPTER SUMMARY:

Part-1:

The author would come across Saheb every morning. She always found him searching for something in a heap of garbage. One morning she asked him, "Why do you do this?" He replied, "I have nothing else to do." She told him to go to school but there was no school in his neighbourhood. She asked him whether he would study if she started school. Saheb was happy. He said he would go to her school. But she did not intend starting a school in the near future. She realized what an impact her words spoken casually had on Saheb.

Saheb's full name is Saheb-e-Alam. It means the Lord of the Universe. But the poor boy wandered on roads along with other poor barefoot boys like him.

The author talked to Saheb's companions. One of the barefoot boys told her that it was a tradition to walk barefoot. But the author does not agree with them. She asserts that a perpetual state of poverty is the real cause. Some children are lucky. Their prayer to get shoes has been granted but the ragpickers remain barefooted.

The ragpickers live in Seemapuri. Seemapuri is very close to Delhi, but there is a world of difference between the two places.

Like all other families of ragpickers, Saheb's family had come from Bangladesh in 1971. They came here because their homes and fields were destroyed by storms. They had nothing to live on.

About 10,000 ragpickers live in Seemapuri. They live in mud structures with roofs of tin and tarpaulin. They lack all civic amenities like sewage and running water. They have voter identity cards and ration cards. This enables them to cast

their votes and buy food. They move about and pitch their tents wherever they can find food. Ragpicking is their sole means of earning a livelihood. Saheb used to stand outside a club. He watched young men playing tennis, a game, which fascinated him. He wished to play tennis. Someone gave him a pair of discarded tennis shoes. It was like a dream coming true. Of course, playing tennis was out of his reach.

Saheb got a job in a tea-stall. He was paid 800 rupees a month and all meals. Perhaps he was not happy. He had lost his carefree life and his freedom. He was no longer his own master.

Part-2:

The author visited Firozabad. Firozabad is famous for its bangle making industry. Almost every other family in Firozabad is engaged in making glass bangles for women all over India. Glass bangles are a symbol of a woman's marital status. Mukesh's family was engaged in making bangles. Mukesh took the author to his house. They went through stinking lanes choked with garbage. Families of bangle makers lived there. Their houses had crumbling walls and wobbly doors.

They enter Mukesh's house which was like any other house in the lane. A frail young woman was cooking meals on a firewood stove. Her eyes were filled with smoke. She greeted the author with a smile. She was the wife of Mukesh's elder brother. She was respected as the daughter-in-law of the family.

Mukesh's father also came in. The daughter-in-law covered her face with a veil as custom demanded. Mukesh's father was old and weak. He had lost his eyesight with the dust from polishing glass bangles. He had worked hard all his life. But he could not afford to send his two sons to school. He could only teach them the art of making bangles. He had built the house but could not repair it.

Mukesh's grandmother expressed her belief in destiny. She said that it was their karma (deeds) that they were born into the bangle maker's caste. It was their destiny to suffer. But no man could change what was already decided by fate. In fact, her belief was shared by all the people of Firozabad.

Another woman told the author that despite hard work they had never had a full meal in their whole life.

The author could see bangles everywhere. She saw boys and girls welding pieces of coloured glass. Their eyes would get used to the darkness and they often lost their eyesight before they were adults. At home, families worked hard all day in front of furnaces with high temperatures. This led to many children becoming blind before they reached adulthood.

Generation after generation, families of bangle makers have been engaged in making bangles. They live in poverty, they work hard and die in poverty. Nothing has changed with the passage of time. They find themselves in the clutches of middlemen and moneylenders. If the youth try to organise themselves, they realise that the police and the administration will not help them. If they try to get out of the vicious circle, they are in trouble. The police beat them and put them in jail.

It is not easy for a bangle maker to do something different. The stigma of his caste always goes with him. But Mukesh wants to be a motor mechanic. He wants to learn this work at a garage far away from home. He wants to be his own master.

ASSIGNMENT

Question.1. To which country did Saheb's parents originally belong? Why did they come to India? (Compartment 2014)

OR

Why did Saheb's parents leave Dhaka and migrate to India? (Compartment 2014)

OR

Why had the ragpickers come to live in Seemapuri? (Foreign 2014)

Question.2. What job did Saheb take up? Was he happy? (All India 2014 Modified)

Question.3. In what sense is garbage gold to the ragpickers? (Compartment 2014)

OR

Garbage to them is gold; why does the author say so about the ragpickers? (Delhi 2008)

Question.4. How is Mukesh different from the other bangle makers of Firozabad? (Delhi 2014; Modified)

Question.5. Whom does Anees Jung blame for the sorry plight of the bangle makers? (Compartment 2014)

Question.6. What is Mukesh's dream? Do you think he will be able to fulfil his dream? Why? Why not? (Compartment 2014)

OR

What was Mukesh's dream? In your opinion, did he achieve his dream? (Foreign 2009)

OR

Is it possible for Mukesh to realise his dream? Justify your answer. (All India 2009)

Question.7. In spite of despair and disease pervading the lives of the slum children, they are not devoid of hope. How far do you agree? (Delhi 2013)

Question.8. Why could the bangle makers not organise themselves into a cooperative? (All India 2012)

Question.9. Mention any two hazards of working in the bangle industry. (Foreign 2011)

Question.10. Why does the author say that the bangle makers are caught in a vicious web?(All India 2010)

Question.11. Is Saheb happy working at the tea stall? How do you know? (Foreign 2010, All India 2009)

Long Answer Type Questions:

Question.12. Give a brief account of life and activities of the people like Saheb-e-Alam settled in Seemapuri. (Delhi 2011)

Question.13. '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? (All India 2011)

Question.14. The bangle makers of Firozabad make beautiful bangles and make everyone happy but they live and die in squalor. Elaborate. (Delhi 2010)