

# English Notes



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## Flamingo Chapter-2

### Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood

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## About the Author – Anees Jung

Anees Jung is a well-known Indian author and journalist. She is famous for writing about **social issues, women, and children in India**. In this chapter, she highlights the **harsh reality of child labour and poverty** in our society.

## Introduction

*Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood* is an extract from Anees Jung's book *The Lost Spring*. The title is **symbolic and ironic**.

Spring is considered the season of **happiness, growth, colour, and freshness**. Similarly, childhood is the spring of human life. It should be full of **joy, education, dreams, and freedom**. However, the author shows how poverty and social traditions steal this spring from millions of children.

The chapter focuses on **child exploitation in hazardous occupations** such as rag-picking and bangle-making. Through the stories of **Saheb-e-Alam and Mukesh**, the author reveals how poverty forces children to work instead of studying and enjoying their childhood.

The writer strongly believes that these children need opportunities to **dream, dare, and live with dignity**.

## Theme of the Chapter

The chapter highlights:

- Child labour
- Poverty and exploitation
- Social injustice
- Loss of childhood
- Dreams and hope
- Impact of traditions
- Need for education and freedom

## Summary of Lost Spring

### Story of Saheb-e-Alam

The author meets Saheb-e-Alam, a rag-picker in **Seemapuri**, a slum area on the outskirts of Delhi. His family migrated from Dhaka due to poverty and natural disasters. Like many other rag-pickers, they live in poor conditions without proper identity, except for ration cards.

Saheb and other children do not go to school. Instead, they search for useful items in garbage. For them, garbage is like **“gold”**, as it helps them earn money. Sometimes, they even find coins or notes, which makes them happy.

The author is deeply moved by Saheb's condition. His name means "**Lord of the Universe**", but in reality, he lives a life of poverty and struggle. He roams barefoot, symbolising his lack of freedom and care.

Later, Saheb starts working at a tea stall. He earns **Rs. 800 per month and free meals**, but he looks unhappy. The author notices that the **spark of freedom is lost**. Earlier, he was free to move around, but now he is bound by work. This shows how child labour destroys not only childhood but also **freedom and identity**.

## Story of Mukesh

The second part of the chapter talks about Mukesh, a boy from **Firozabad**, the centre of India's bangle-making and glass-blowing industry. Unlike others, Mukesh has a dream—to become a **motor mechanic** and drive a car.

He belongs to a family of traditional bangle makers. His house is small and dirty, surrounded by garbage and narrow lanes. Three generations of his family have worked in the same industry.

The working conditions are extremely dangerous. Children work in **dark, hot rooms near furnaces**. They suffer from serious health problems like **loss of eyesight and lung diseases**.

Mukesh's father is blind, and many workers lose their eyesight before adulthood. They are trapped in a vicious cycle of:

- Poverty
- Moneylenders
- Middlemen
- Police
- Social traditions

They do not even know that child labour is illegal. Most of them have accepted their fate and stopped dreaming. However, Mukesh is different. He dares to dream of a better life.

## Title Justification

The title *Lost Spring* is appropriate because it highlights the **loss of childhood due to poverty and exploitation**. Children like Saheb and Mukesh are deprived of education, freedom, and happiness. Their spring (childhood) is lost as they are forced into labour.

## Message of the Chapter

The chapter gives a strong message:

- Society must work to end child labour.
- Education is the only solution to poverty.
- Children should be given opportunities to grow and dream.
- We must create awareness about social injustice.

## Character Sketch

### Saheb-e-Alam

- Innocent and curious
- Victim of poverty
- Hardworking
- Symbol of lost childhood
- Accepts his fate

### Mukesh

- Determined and hopeful
- Dares to dream
- Courageous
- Symbol of change

### Detailed Summary

“Lost spring”, an extract from Anees Jung's book "The Lost Spring- Stories of stolen childhood" has a tinge of irony. Spring being the best season of a year, is full of colour, fragrance, freshness, renewal and growth. Similarly, the childhood of human life is often linked to spring, as it marks the beginning of human life, full of joy, pleasure, play and growth. The writer expresses her concern over the exploitation of childhood in hazardous jobs like rag-picking and bangle making. Abject poverty and thoughtless traditions result in the loss of childhood of millions of children like Saheb and Mukesh by working hard to support themselves and their families rather than enjoying their childhood by playing and seeking education. There is a dire need to provide these poverty stricken children, opportunity to dare, dream and do and a life of dignity.

Thus the title brings out the depravity of child labour in a very telling way. The author examines and analyses the impoverished condition and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation. These children are denied education and 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 a living. They live in impoverished conditions but resign to their fate. The writer is pained to see Saheb-e-alam, a rag picker whose name means the ruler of universe, losing the spark of childhood and roaming barefoot with his friends.

Now, from morning to noon, Saheb works in a tea stall and is paid Rs. 800 per month. He sadly realizes that he is no longer a free bird and master of his own will. He is more of a bonded labourer with surrendered freedom and identity and this loss weighs heavily on his tender shoulders.

The author then tells about another victim of poverty, Mukesh who wants to be a motor mechanic and wishes to drive a car. Hailing from Firozabad, the centre of India's bangle making and glass blowing industry, he has always worked in the glass making industry. He

lives in a stinking surrounding with choked lanes and garbage piles all around in a half built shack with thatched dead grass roof with iron door and his family of three generations uses firewood stove and aluminium utensils.

His family like the others there do not know that it is illegal for children to work in such close proximity to furnaces, with such high temperature. They are exposed to various health hazards like losing their eyesight as they work in abysmal conditions, in dark and dingy cells. Mukesh's father is blind as were his father and grandfather before him.

They lead a hand to mouth existence as they are caught in the vicious web of the money lenders, middlemen, police and the traditions. So, burdened are the bangle makers of Firozabad that most of them have lost their eyesight before even attaining adulthood. Their desire to dream and dare is snubbed in their childhood only.

- The author examines and analyses the impoverished conditions and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation these children are denied an education and 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 other 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 the life they live in impoverished conditions but are resigned to their fate.
- The writer is pained to see Saheb, a rag picker whose name means the ruler of earth, lose the spark of childhood and roams barefooted with his friends.
- From morning to noon the author encounters him in a tea stall and is paid Rs. 800 He sadly realizes that he is no longer his own master and this loss of identity 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 worked in the glass making industry.
- His family like the others there do 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.
- Mukesh's father is blind as were his father and grandfather before him.

- They lead a hand to mouth existence as they are caught in the vicious web of the money lenders, middlemen, police and the 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.

## Important Points for Revision

- ✓ Poverty forces children into labour
- ✓ Child labour destroys freedom and identity
- ✓ Social traditions trap families
- ✓ Education is necessary for change
- ✓ Dreams can break the cycle of poverty

## Important Questions

### Short Answer Questions

1. Why is garbage called 'gold' by rag-pickers?
2. What does Saheb's name signify?
3. Why does Saheb look unhappy while working at the tea stall?
4. What dangers do bangle makers face in Firozabad?
5. What is Mukesh's dream?

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### Long Answer Questions

1. How does Anees Jung present the problem of child labour in *Lost Spring*?
2. Compare Saheb and Mukesh as victims of poverty.
3. Discuss the role of traditions in trapping children in poverty.