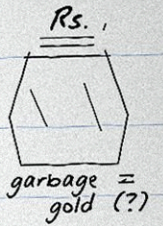


Lost Spring

by Anees Jung (Flamingo, Ch. 2)

About the author

Anees Jung - Indian writer & columnist.
Worked for women & under-privileged in
developing countries. Book: 'Lost Spring,
Stories of Stolen Childhood' - ~~1990~~ 2005.
These two extracts are from that book.



Type / Genre

Reportage - non-fiction prose, first-person,
observational. Two real stories woven into
one chapter to expose child labour. *

Are the children destined to this? *

<- the title's
<- real question

Two parts of the essay:

(1) Sometimes I find a Rupee in the garbage

- Saheb, a rag-picker in Seemapuri,
on outskirts of Delhi.

(2) I want to drive a car - Mukesh,

a bangle-maker's son in Firozabad,
wants to be a motor mechanic.

Part I - Saheb in Seemapuri

Setting

Seemapuri - outskirts of Delhi yet far from it metaphorically. 10,000 rag-pickers live here.

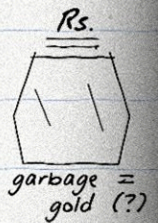
Refugees from Dhaka (1971 war), no identity, no permits, no school - only ration cards.

Garbage = means of survival

<- for adults =
<- bread + roof

Plot summary

1. Narrator meets Saheb each morning, scrounging for 'gold' in garbage heaps.
2. Asks why he does it - he ~~plays~~ has no school, so he picks rags.
3. Narrator jokes - 'I will open a school' - feels ashamed when Saheb takes her seriously days later. A casual remark becomes a broken promise.
4. Full name : Saheb-e-Alam = 'Lord of the Universe' - bitter irony.
5. Saheb watches the tennis club through the wire fence - 'gates closed' for him.
6. Later picks up a job at a tea stall - Rs 800 + meals, but he has lost his freedom + the bag no longer his own.



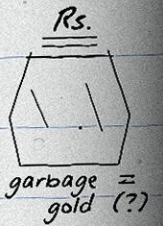
Character Sketch - Saheb

Profile points

- ① Age : 10-12 yrs, barefoot, tousled hair.
- ② Origin : family fled Dhaka after the 1971 war ; settled in Seemapuri slums.
- ③ Work : rag-picker - hunts for coins, broken toys, recyclable scrap.
- ④ Dream : to go to school ; to wear tennis shoes ; to play with the bat & ball.
- ⑤ Voice : mostly silent, child-like, hopeful at first, then numb at the tea stall.

Key images / symbols

1. Shoes : discarded pair with a hole - still a 'dream come true' for him.
2. Tennis club fence : the wire between his world & the privileged.
3. Steel canister : replaces his light plastic bag at the tea stall - heavier load, lost autonomy.
4. Garbage : for adults = bread ; for children = wrapped wonder.



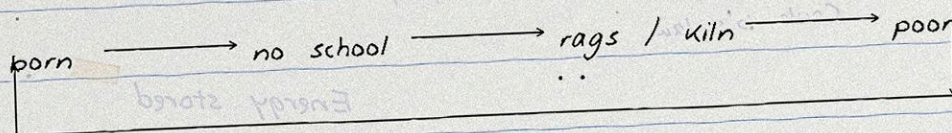
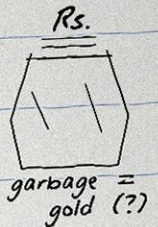
'... shoes - a dream come true.'

<- irony of
<- small joys

Themes (esp. Part I)

1. Cycle of poverty

Born poor → no school → early labour → no skill → stays poor. Children inherit the same fate as parents. Garbage feeds them but never lets them escape.



2. Lost / stolen childhood

Spring = symbol of childhood. These kids skip the spring of life - no play, no story, no school. Saheb's grin at the bat/ball shows the child still alive inside, briefly.

Title : Lost SPRING = lost youth

<- double
<- meaning

3. Apathy + broken promises

Society + system ignore the rag-pickers. Even the narrator - a sensitive observer - feels guilty for an empty promise of a school. Adults fail children at every step. *

4. Migration & loss of identity

Part II - Mukesh of Firozabad

Setting

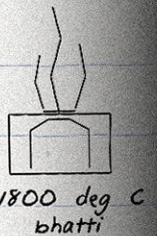
Firozabad (UP) - 'glass-blowing capital' of India. 20,000 children work in dark hovels around hot furnaces, welding glass bangles for the ~~brides~~ 'sahaag' of married women.

Bangle = symbol of sahaag (auspice)

← irony :
← makers cursed

Plot summary

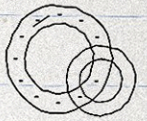
1. Narrator visits Mukesh's home in Firozabad - hut, hovel, hot blast of furnace, hundreds of bangles in heaps.
2. Family : grandmother (still believes 'this is what God has willed'), father (could not build a house in his life), elder brother and sister-in-law (cook thin half-fed chapatis).
3. Mukesh is different : 'I will be a motor mechanic' - first dream beyond family trade. Walks to nearest garage daily.
4. 'I will learn to drive a car' - even when asked if he will fly a plane, he stays silent. Dream is real but humble.
5. Bangle work blinds many before adult-



Character Sketch - Mukesh

* Profile points

- ① Age : teen, son of a bangle-maker.
- ② Trait : quiet but determined ; dares to dream outside his caste's trade.
- ③ Dream : to be a motor mechanic ; learn to drive a car. Not a pilot, not a film hero - a small, practical dream.
- ④ Action : walks long to garage daily, even without anyone teaching him.
- ⑤ Symbol : hope inside a hopeless street.



sahaag
ka chihni

The bangle-trap : who holds them ?

Mukesh's family is caught by a chain :

Sahukars (money-lenders)

↓
Middlemen

↓
Policemen

↓
Lawmakers / netas

↓
Bureaucrats

Any attempt to organise = jail / beaten.

So no ~~co-op~~ co-operative ; families stay trapped.

Two worlds in one boy

Burden of caste-tradition vs his own will.

Themes (Part II) + Devices

Theme : Caste-trapped labour

Bangle-making is a hereditary trade ; born into it = chained to it. 'God-given lineage' becomes the family's prison. Even illegal : kids under 14 should not work near furnaces.

Theme : Health - blindness, burns

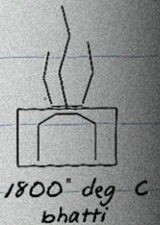
Soldering hot glass in dim rooms damages eyes - many go blind before adulthood.

'Lineage of bangle-makers' = curse

<- tradition
<- as trap

Literary devices used

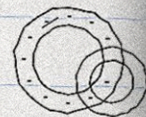
- (i) Irony : 'Saheb-e-Alam' = 'Lord of Universe' actually picks rags ; bangle-makers make 'suhag' but live without ease or joy.
- (ii) Metaphor : 'Lost Spring' itself ; garbage = 'gold' ; furnaces = hell.
- (iii) Imagery : 'thick blanket of dust', 'dingy cells with high windows', heaps of vivid bangles in 'humid stink'.
- (iv) Alliteration : 'hot blast of furnaces' ; 'bleak homes, blackened walls'.



Quotes + Exam Points + Revision

Key quotations to remember

- (1) "Sometimes I find a rupee, even a ten-rupee note in the garbage."
- Saheb (rag = surprise = lottery)
- (2) "It is his Karam, his destiny."
- Mukesh's grandmother (resignation)
- (3) "I will be a motor mechanic."
- Mukesh (the lone hopeful note)
- (4) "Garbage to them is gold."
- narrator (irony, central image)



sahaag
ka chihni

Likely exam questions

- ① SA (3M) : Why does the narrator say garbage is gold for Seemapuri's adults & children ?
- ② SA (3M) : Two hindrances that stop Mukesh's people from leaving the bangle trade.
- ③ LA (6M) : Compare Saheb and Mukesh - whose dream feels more achievable & why ?

Quick revision (30-sec view)

Saheb : rag-picker, Seemapuri, refugee,
tea-stall job - loses freedom.

Mukesh : bangle-maker's son, Firozabad,
wants to be a motor mechanic - hope.