

GIST OF THE LESSON

- 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.