

II

I want to drive a car

The author comes across Mukesh in Ferozabad. His family is engaged in bangle making, but Mukesh insists on being his own master. "I will be a motor mechanic", he announces. "I will learn to drive a car", he says.

Ferozabad is famous for its bangles. Every other family in Ferozabad is engaged in making bangles. Families has spent generations working around furnaces, welding glass, making

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bangles for ~~mo~~ women. None of them know that it is illegal for children like Mukesh to work in the glass furnaces with high temperatures, in dingy cells without air and light. They slog their daylight hours, often losing the brightness of their eyes. If the law is enforced, it could get Mukesh and 20,000 children out of the hot furnaces.

They walk down stinking lanes choked with garbage, past homes that remain hovels with crumbling walls, wobbly doors and no windows. Humans and animals, co-exist there. They enter a half-built shack. One part of it is thatched with dead grass. A frail young woman is cooking evening meal over a firewood stove. She is the wife of Mukesh's elder brother and already in charge of three men - her husband, Mukesh and their father. The father is a poor bangle maker, he has failed to renovate a house and send his two sons to school. All he has managed to do is teach them what he knows; the art of making bangles.

Mukesh's grandmother has watched her own husband go blind with the dust from polishing the glass of bangles. She says that it is his destiny. She implies that god-given lineage can never be broken. They have been born in the caste of bangle makers and have seen nothing but bangles of various colours. Boys and girls sit with fathers and mothers welding pieces of coloured glass into circles of bangles. They work in dark hutments, next to lines of flames of flickering oil lamps. Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to the light outside. They often end up losing their eyesight before they become adults.

Sarita, a young girl in a drab pink dress, sits along side an elderly woman. She is soldering pieces of glass. Her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine. Perhaps she does not know the sanctity of the bangles she helps make. The old woman beside her has not enjoyed even one full meal in her entire life time. Her husband is an old man with flowing beard. He knows nothing

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except bangles. He has made a house for the family to live in. He has a roof over his head.

Little has moved with time in Erozabad. Families do not have enough to eat. They do not have money to do anything except carry on the business of making bangles. The young men echo the lament of their elders. They have fallen into the vicious circle of middlemen who trapped their fathers and forefathers. Years of mind-numbing toil have killed all initiative and the ability to dream. They are unwilling to get organised into a cooperative. They fear that they will be hauled up by the police, beaten and dragged to jail for doing something illegal. There is no leader among them. No one helps them to see things differently. All of them appear tired. They talk of poverty, greed and injustice.

Two distinct worlds are visible here, families caught in poverty and burdened with the stigma of caste in which they are born; the other, a vicious circle of money-lenders, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law and

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politicians. Together they have imposed the baggage on the child that he cannot put it down. He accepts it as naturally as his father. To do anything else would mean to dare. And daring is not part of his growing up. The author is cheered when she senses a flash of it in Mukesh who wants to be motor mechanic.

Q/A

Q 1 What is Sahel looking for in the garbage dumps? Where is he and where has he come from?

Ans. Sahel is looking for any precious thing which he cannot afford to buy. Things like a rupee, silver coin or a pair of shoes. He has come to the garbage dump in the writer's neighbourhood. He lives Seemapuri in Delhi and has come from Dhaka.

Q-2 What explanations does the author offer for the children not wearing footwear?

Ans. The author says that they do not wear footwear because it is a tradition in their families to remain

barefoot.

Q-3 Is Sahel happy working at the tea-stall? Explain.

Ans. No, Sahel is not happy working at the tea-stall. He is no longer his own master. His face has lost the carefree look. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulder. The bag was his. The canister belongs to the man who owns the tea-shop.

Q-4 What makes the city of Firozabad famous?

Ans. The city of Firozabad is famous for its bangles. Every other family in Firozabad is engaged in making bangles. It is the centre of India's glass-blowing industry. Families have spent generations working around furnaces, welding glass, making bangles for the women in the land.

Q-5 Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry?

Ans. Boys and girls with their fathers and mothers sit in dark hutments, next to lines of flames of flickering oil lamps. They weld pieces of coloured glass into circles of bangles. Their eyes are more adjusted to the dark than to the light outside.

They often end up losing eyesight before they become adults. Even the dust from polishing the glass of bangles is injurious to eyes. Many workers have become blind. The furnaces have very high temperature and therefore very dangerous.

Q 6 How is Mukesh's attitude to his situation different from that of his family?

Ans. Mukesh's grandmother thinks that the god-given lineage can never be broken. Her son and grandsons are born in the caste of bangle makers. They have seen nothing but bangles. Mukesh's father has taught them what he knows - the art of making bangles. But Mukesh wants to be a motor mechanic. He will go to a garage and learn, though the garage is far away from his home.

Q-7 What could be some of the reasons for the migration of people from villages to cities?

Ans. People migrate from villages to cities in search of livelihood. Their fields fail to provide them means of survival. Cities provide employment,

jobs or other means of getting food. The problem in case of the poor is to feed the hungry members. Survival is of primary concern.

Q-8 Would you agree that promises made to the poor children are rarely kept? Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the text?

Ans. The promises made to the poor are rarely kept. The author asks Sahab half-joking, whether he will come to her school if she starts one. Sahab agrees to do so. A few days later he asks if the school is ready. The writer feels embarrassed at having made a promise that was not meant. Promises like hers abound in every corner of their bleak world.

Q-9 What forces conspire to keep the workers in bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty?

Ans. Certain forces conspire to keep the workers in bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty. These include the money-lenders, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats and the politicians. Together they impose a heavy burden on the child.

Q-10 Who was Sahab? What was he doing and why?

Ans. Sahab was a young boy of school going age. He was looking for gold in the garbage dumps of the big city. He had left his home in search of living. He has nothing else to do but pick rags.

H.W - Do all the Q/A
in Notebook and
revise the summary