

## Chapter 9: Bholi

## Read and Find Out

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## Question: 1

Why is Bholi's father worried about her?

## Answer:

Bholi was not like other children. She fell off a cot as a child due to which her brain was slightly damaged. She learnt to speak very late and used to stammer. Her face and whole body was covered with pockmarks. Thus, her father was worried about her marriage prospects.

## Question: 2

For what unusual reason is Bholi sent to school?

## Answer:

As Ramlal was a government official and the Tehsildar had asked Ramlal to send his daughters to the new school in his village, Bholi was sent to school just to satisfy the Tehsildar. As Ramlal's wife felt that sending girls to school affected their marriage prospects adversely, she did not want to send any of her daughters to school. However, Bholi, with her pock-marked face and dull brain would not be possible to get married anyway, so Bholi's parents decided to send her to school to satisfy the Tehsildar.

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## Question: 3

Does Bholi enjoy her first day at school?

## Answer:

Bholi was afraid at first. She even wept when the teacher asked her name. She just sat in a corner. But, the beautiful pictures on the classroom wall attracted her. The gentle, kind and loving manner of her teacher made her comfortable. She was looking forward to her new life by the time the first day ended. Thus, although initially she did not enjoy it, but by the time she went home she had liked school.

## Question: 4

Does she find her teacher to be different from the people at home?

## Answer:

Bholi had been a neglected child at home. She was never bathed nor her clothes washed. She was criticised and everyone made fun of her. But, she found her teacher to be entirely different. Her teacher did not make fun of her ugliness or her stammering. She encouraged her tenderly. Her affection deeply touched Bholi's heart.

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## Question: 5

Why do Bholi's parents accept Bishamber's marriage proposal?

## Answer:

Bholi's parents accepted Bishamber's marriage proposal as he was a well-to-do grocer and had not asked for any dowry.

## Question: 6

Why does the marriage not take place ?

## Answer:

At the time of marriage, Bishamber asked for a dowry of five thousand rupees because he saw Bholi's pock-marked face. Ramlal had no choice but to pay. But, Bholi refused to marry the greedy man. She asserted her rights and dignity. Thus the marriage party was turned away.

### Think About It

#### Question: 1

**Bholi had many apprehensions about going to school. What made her feel that she was going to a better place than her home?**

#### Answer:

The day she was going to school forced her parents to dress her nicely. She was bathed and her hair was properly done. Until then she was not being taken care of. The special treatment she received made her feel that she was going to a better place.

#### Question: 2

**How did Bholi's teacher play an important role in changing the course of her life?**

#### Answer:

Bholi stammered and was just a bundle of nerves when she attended school in the beginning. Her teacher treated her kindly and encouraged her to have confidence and be bold. She taught her to read and write and made her an independent girl who was aware of her rights. Thus, she changed her life.

#### Question: 3

**Why did Bholi at first agree to an unequal match? Why did she later reject the marriage. What does this tell about her?**

#### Answer:

Bholi agreed to the match at first to fulfil her parents' wishes. Later on, she rejected the marriage when the bridegroom asked for dowry. This tells us that Bholi was not a timid – and dumb girl. She was aware of her rights. She also knew how to fight for her own dignity and feared no one.

#### Question: 4

**Bholi's real name is Sulekha. We are told this right at the beginning. But only in the last but one paragraph of the story is Bholi called Sulekha again. Why do you think she is called Sulekha at that point in the story?**

#### Answer:

The word Bholi means a simpleton. Throughout the story she had been a simpleton who hardly expressed her opinion on any matter. The word Sulekha means 'a person with a beautiful sense of letters'. In this story this word has a larger meaning of being a literate, intelligent and mature individual. After her education, Bholi has really changed to Sulekha and her assertion at the time of her marriage is her announcement to the world that she is no more a Bholi, but is a Sulekha.

### Talk About It

#### Question: 1

**Bholi's teacher helped her overcome social barriers by encouraging and motivating her. How do you think you can contribute towards changing the social attitudes illustrated in this story ?**

#### Answer:

We can contribute by saying no to taking or giving dowry. We must not discriminate between a boy and a girl. Both should be given equal rights and opportunities to grow. We must also learn to respect those who are differently abled and treat them at par.

#### Question: 2

Should girls be aware of their rights and assert them? Should girls and boys have the same rights, duties and privileges? What are some of the ways in which society treats them differently? When we speak of 'Human rights', do we differentiate between girl's rights and boy's rights?

**Answer:**

Yes, there is a differentiation between girl's and boy's rights. Although equal in the eyes of law, society treats them differently. Parents spend more on a boy's education than that of a girl. A girl is just trained to be a wife and mother. Boys have special privileges in matters of food, career or freedom. Girl's must be aware of their rights to exercise them. They must utilise their education to preserve their self – reliance and dignity. They must be ready to demand their due and even fight for it.

**Question: 3**

Do you think the characters in the story were speaking to each other in English? If not, in which language were they speaking? (you can get clues from the names of the persons and the non-English words used in the story.)

**Answer:**

No, we do not think so. They spoke in Hindi. Several words like 'numberdar, tehsildar sahib, izzat and pitaji' are ample proof of that. Even the names of characters like 'Ramlal' and 'Bholi' support that.

Champpstreet