

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 9: BHOLI



BHOLI

~Summary~

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Bholi's First Few Years

Bholi was one of seven children of Ramlal. Ramlal was a well-to-do man as he was the Numberdar of the village. There was no lack of comforts in his home but Bholi was still neglected. She fell off her cot when she was just ten months old. Her brain suffered some damage and she was slow in learning things. So, everyone called her Bholi. An attack of small pox at the age of two years left her pock-marked on her entire body. She learned to speak when she was five but she stammered. Everyone made fun of her. Even her parents took her to be just an ugly burden.

Bholi Goes to School

Once the Tehsildar came to inaugurate a new primary school in the village. He asked Ramlal to send his daughters to school. Ramlal could not say no to him. His wife objected that no one would marry the girls if they went to school. But, then she felt that Bholi was ugly and it would be difficult to get her married. So, they decided to send only Bholi to school.

Bholi Prepares for School

Bholi was fearful of going to school at first. Then, she was given new and clean clothes to wear. She was given a bath and her hair was oiled. Now, she felt better. She thought of school as a nice place. All these years no one had taken so much care of her.

Bholi's First Day at School

Bholi found the classroom full of girls like her. She was afraid and sat in one corner. She was attracted to the colourful pictures on the wall. She was much impressed by the realistic pictures of birds and animals. The teacher asked her name. Bholi stammered and then started crying. After the other children left, the teacher came back to her. She called her lovingly. This time Bholi was able to speak her name better. The teacher encouraged her. She asked her to be fearless. She also told her to come to school everyday. Bholi felt as if a new life was beginning for her.

A Match for Bholi

After a few years, Bholi's parents got a marriage proposal for her. Ramlal was not very happy. The man was a widower with grown up children. But, his wife was unconcerned. She just felt that as Bholi was so ugly that proposal was good for her. Her father wanted to know how Bholi felt about the proposal but her mother refused to ask Bholi about it.

Bholi Stands up for her Rights

When the wedding was about to take place, Bishamber Nath asked for five thousand rupees to marry Bholi as she had pock-marks. He also threatened to walk away from the ceremony. Ramlal was afraid of the humiliation and so, with tears in his eyes, he handed the dowry money to Bishamber. Bishamber proceeded to garland Bholi but Bholi threw the garland away. She asked her father to take back the money and refused to marry the greedy coward. Everyone went away. Ramlal asked her what she would do now. She just told him she would work as a teacher in the same school where she had studied. Her education has changed her outlook.

Conclusion of Bholi

In the chapter – Bholi illustrates that proper moral and emotional protection should be given to children during the formative years of childhood to help them grow up into responsible citizens.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 54)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1. Why is Bholi's father worried about her?

Answer: Bholi was different from other children. She neither had good looks nor intelligence. Bholi's father was worried about finding a good bridegroom for Bholi.

Question 2. For what unusual reasons is Bholi sent to school?

Answer: Tehsildar had ordered Bholi's father Ramlal to send his daughters to school to set an example. Ramlal's wife felt that sending daughters to school would impact their marriage prospects. However, she said that Bholi could be sent to school because there are anyway less chances of her getting married with such an ugly face and no intelligence. Thus, Bholi was sent to school.

Questions (Page No. 55)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1. Does Bholi enjoy her first day at school?

Answer: Yes, Bholi enjoyed her first day at school. Initially, she was frightened. But, she was delighted to find so many girls of her own age present there. She felt that one of the girls might become her friend. Also, there were a lot of pictures on the classroom wall that enticed her.

Question 2. Does she find her teacher different from the people at home?

Answer: Yes, she finds her teacher quite different from the people at home. At home, she is never spoken to in a polite manner but her teacher spoke to her in a very soothing way.

At home, she was disregarded for stammering but her teacher encouraged her to speak with confidence instead of making fun of her. This touched her heart.

Questions (Page No. 58)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1. Why do Bholi's parents accept Bishamber's marriage proposal?

Answer: Bholi's parents accepted Bishamber's marriage proposal because they thought that Bholi might never get another marriage proposal and might stay unmarried for her entire life. Bishamber was a well-to-do grocer and had not asked for dowry too.

Question 2. Why does the marriage not take place?

Answer: When Bishamber saw the pock-marks on Bholi's face, he demanded five thousand rupees from Ramlal. Due to the demand of dowry, Bholi refused to get married to him.

Questions (Page No. 55)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

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: Bholi had many apprehensions about going to school. She had seen Lakshmi, their old cow, getting sold out.

When Bholi was given clean clothes to wear, was bathed and her hair was oiled, she felt that she was going to a better place than her home.

Question 2. How did Bholi's teacher play an important role in changing the course of her life?

Answer: Bholi's teacher did not make fun of her stammering like others used to do. She encouraged her to speak without any fear. Unlike others, she was polite to Bholi. She played an important role in changing the course of her life and making her a confident person who could read, write and speak with clarity.

Question 3. Why did Bholi at first agree to an unequal match? Why did she later reject the marriage? What does this tell us about her?

Answer: Bholi agreed to an unequal match at first because she had overheard her parents talking about the marriage proposal. They were concerned about her marriage and thought that this was the best proposal Bholi could get as the man had not even asked for dowry.

On the day of marriage, when the bridegroom saw Bholi's pock-marks, he demanded a dowry of five thousand rupees. He humiliated her father for the dowry. That is why she rejected the marriage.

This tells us that Bholi has self-respect and confidence. She did not want her father to give dowry for her marriage. She was able to take a brave and wise decision on her own.

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: Bholi means simpleton. She never takes her stand. She follows what is told. She even agrees to an unequal match for the sake of her parents. But, towards the end of the story, when she sees her father pleading in front of the bridegroom and getting humiliated, she refuses to get married. She is called Sulekha at that point in the story because she is now a mature and intelligent girl who is able to take her own decisions. She is aware of her rights and does not let anyone humiliate her family.

Question 5. Bholi's story must have moved you. Do you think girl children are not treated at par with boys? You are aware that the government has introduced a scheme to save the girl child as the sex ratio is declining. The scheme is called Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Save the Girl Child.

Read about the scheme and design a poster in groups of four and display on the school notice board.

Answer: Do it yourself.

Questions (Page No. 62)

(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 towards changing the social attitudes illustrated in the story by:

- Ensuring that girls and boys are aware of their rights
- Treating girls and boys equally
- Giving them equal right to education and employment
- Saying 'No' to dowry

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 girls' rights and boys' rights?

Answer: Yes, girls should definitely be aware of their rights and assert them. Girls and boys must have the same rights, duties and privileges.

People treat boys and girls differently, especially in villages and small towns. Parents tend to spend more on the education of boys as compared to girls. They train their daughters to be polite, calm and an expert at household chores.

When we speak of 'human rights', law does not differentiate between girls' rights and boys' rights. But this disparity exists in society.

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, the characters in the story were not speaking to each other in English. Words in the text like pitaji, tehsildaar, izzat, numberdar, etc. indicate that the characters in the story were speaking in Hindi.

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