

Bholi

Answers to NCERT Questions

READ AND FIND OUT

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

Ans: 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 the marks of smallpox. Thus, her father was worried about her marriage prospects.

2. For what unusual reason is Bholi sent to school?

Ans: 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.

3. Does Bholi enjoy her first day at school?

Ans: 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.

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

Ans: 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.

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

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

6. Why does the marriage not take place?

Ans: 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 was turned away.

THINK ABOUT IT

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

Ans: 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.

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

Ans: 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.

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

Ans: Bholi agreed to the match at first to fulfil her parents' wishes. Later on, she rejected the marriage when the groom 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.

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?

Ans: 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 Sulekha.

TALK ABOUT IT

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?

Ans: 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.

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?

Ans: 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. Girls 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 rights and even fight for it.

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.)

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

Additional Questions

Short Answer Questions (30-40 words)

1. "God cannot be everywhere, so he created mothers". Do you think Bholi's mother complies with this statement? Give at least three reasons supporting your answer.

Ans: Bholi's mother does not comply with this statement. Following are the reasons for it.

- i. Bholi's mother never took care of her — neither in childhood or in young age.
- ii. She was not concerned even about her studies or clothing.
- iii. She did not bother about Bholi's groom. Whether he was an aged person or a greedy one, will he honour her daughter or keep her as a slave in his house.

2. Describe Bholi's feelings when her teacher assured to make her the most learned in her village.

Ans: Bholi was sent to school because the Tehsildar compelled Ramlal to send one of his daughters to school, so that it may prove a role model for other girls. She was a slow learner and stammered while speaking and all the children in the school made fun of her. But her teacher encouraged her and made all efforts to make her the most learned

in her village. She was impressed by her soft and soothing voice. She felt comfortable and stopped stammering. Now, she was full of confidence and learned all the syllabus taught by her teacher.

3. Demonstrate that Bholi's wedding was a grand one.

Ans: Bholi's marriage was fixed with Bishamber who had a big shop, his own house and several thousand in the bank. It was a grand marriage. A brass-band playing a popular tune from an Indian film headed the procession. Secondly, the groom was riding on a decorated horse. He came there with a big party of friends and relatives which looked like a procession.

4. What actions did Bholi take to stop her marriage with Bishamber?

Ans: Bholi's marriage was going to take place with Bishamber who himself was forty-five or fifty years old. He also limped and had two children from his first wife. Even then, he demanded 5,000 rupees as dowry. Bholi stopped the marriage by throwing away the garland in the fire. She threw away the veil and asked her father to take back the money and refused to marry Bishamber.

5. How did Bholi console her father in the end?

Ans: Bholi consoled her father that even if she did not get married, she would take care of her parents in their old age. She also tells them that she would teach in the same school where she had learnt so much.

6. Draw a conclusion as to why Bholi's teacher felt like an artist admiring her masterpiece.

Ans: Bholi's teacher felt like an artist admiring her masterpiece, when she realised how her soothing words, education, and motivation gave confidence to Bholi to face the world and transformed her from a girl who was unsure about herself and a backward child, to a bold and confident girl.

7. What did the Tehsildar suggest to Ramlal?

Ans: The Tehsildar had come to the village to open the first primary school for girls. He told Ramlal that as a revenue official, he is the representative of the government in the village, and so should set an example for the villagers by sending his daughters to school.

8. Everyone's first day at school is generally filled with fun, joy and happiness. How was Bholi's first day at school?

Ans: The teacher gave her a book having colourful pictures of animals. With every picture was a word in big black letters. The teacher told her that she would be able to read that book in a month. Then she would give her a bigger book. She liked the book very much. Thus, she enjoyed her first day in school.

9. How was Bholi different from the other children at home?

Ans: When Bholi was 10 months old, she fell from a cot. This damaged a part of her brain and affected her intelligence. She became a slow learner, a retarded child. So she was called Bholi, a simpleton. When she was two years old, she had an attack of smallpox that left pock-marks on her face and she looked ugly. Rest of her brothers and sisters were normal.

10. What idea do you form of Ramlal's personality?

Ans: Ramlal was the revenue officer of the village. He was a prosperous farmer and had seven children. He was orthodox. He did not believe in the ideology of sending girls to school as it would be difficult to find a good match for them. He wanted to get rid of Bholi as she was ugly and not intelligent.

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10. What idea do you form of Ramlal's personality?

Ans: Ramlal was the revenue officer of the village. He was a prosperous farmer and had seven children. He was orthodox. He did not believe in the ideology of sending girls to school as it would be difficult to find a good match for them. He wanted to get rid of Bholi as she was ugly and not intelligent.

Long Answer Questions (100-150 words)

1. Although Bholi never got the deserved love, care and acceptance from her family, she is ready to reciprocate like all daughters in Indian society. Discuss the character of Bholi in the light of the above-mentioned statement.

Ans: Bholi was the fourth daughter of Ramlal. She got her brain damaged when she was only ten months old. At the age of two, she had an attack of smallpox which left permanent pockmarks on her body. She stammered while speaking. Thus, she was a neglected child in her family. Nobody took care of her. Nobody loved her. Nobody had any expectation from her. Her parents called her a dumb cow and treated her so. The old dresses of her sister were passed on to her. No one cared to mend or wash her clothes. New clothes had never been made for Bholi. No one oiled her hairs or tried to teach her anything. Luckily, she was sent to school and her teacher changed her life entirely. Now she was a learned girl. When her parents decided to marry her with Bishamber, a fifty years old lame, greedy person, she did not speak a word and agreed to it silently for the sake of her parents. She did not even protest. Later on, when Bishamber insulted her parents and demanded 5,000 rupees, she refused to marry him and declared that she will never marry anyone and will always serve her parents in their old age. Thus, in spite of being a neglected child, Bholi acted like all daughters in Indian societies.

2. Bholi challenged the dowry seeker. She used to be a meek girl. What changed her attitude towards life?

Ans: Bholi used to be a meek girl. She had pockmarks on her body. Her brain got damaged when she was just ten months. She was also a slow learner. She could not speak till she was five. Later on, she started stammering while speaking.

She was sent to school just for formality. Her parents were not serious about her studies. But her teacher changed her life. She encouraged her to speak properly and to learn more and more in school. Then she knew what is good or what is bad. Now she could differentiate between right and wrong. Education totally changed her personality. Even then she behaved like an obedient girl and agreed to marry Bishamber— fifty years old, lame person. But she could not stand his demand of dowry. She refused to fulfil Bishamber's demand of five thousand rupees and denied to marry him. Thus, education changed her attitude towards her life.

3. 'And in her smiling eyes was the light of deep satisfaction that an artist feels when he is contemplating the completion of his masterpiece.' Imagine you are

Bholi's teacher. You are overwhelmed with a sense of satisfaction to see the conversion of Bholi to Sulekha. Express your feelings in the form of a diary entry.

Ans:

Thursday, 19 May 20xx

Dear Diary,

Today I felt very much satisfied as I got success in changing Bholi to Sulekha. As her name signifies, Bholi was really a simple girl. I cannot forget her first entry in my class. A frightened, confused and simple girl was her first appearance. She used to stammer while speaking. But my two words of affection filled her with confidence. She left stammering and became a confident, determined girl. She was determined to learn everything silently. In her family, nobody noticed the changes that took place in her personality and got her engaged to a fifty-year-old lame man with two children. She kept the honour of her parents and agreed to this marriage. But she could not stand with the demand of dowry. She threw away her garland in the fire and asked her father to take back the money. She raised her voice against dowry. She asked the ladies of the village why girls should be treated like a dumb cow. This was the change I always wanted to see in her personality. Today, I feel I have completed my masterpiece without any error. Today, she signified her real name Sulekha.

4. Demanding dowry is an evil practice. Describe how Bholi, a dumb cowgirl fought against this evil.

Ans: Bholi was considered a dumb cowgirl. She was sent to school just to obey the orders of the Tehsildar. Her teacher played an important role in changing her life from Bholi to Sulekha. Now, she became a confident, educated girl but nobody noticed any change in her personality because she was no one for her family. She got engaged with a fifty-year-old lame man for which she agreed silently. But when he demanded five thousand rupees as dowry, Bholi at once stood up against it. She refused to marry him. She gave her consent for a mismatched marriage but she did not support dowry. She called Bishamber a mean, greedy and contemptible coward. She was no more a dumb driven cow. She set an example for the society and became the role model for all the girls.

5. Who was Bishamber? Why did Bholi's parents accept his marriage proposal?

Ans: Bishamber Nath was a well-to-do grocer of the same age as Bholi's father. He was a widower who had a house of his own and a big bank balance. To marry off his daughter to Bishamber was a dream for Ramlal, who, after an initial hesitation, was overjoyed to accept his proposal for marriage. Moreover, Bishamber did not demand dowry. For Ramlal, Bholi was the fourth daughter. Her pock-marked face, her slowness in understanding things, and her stammering were real problems for Ramlal in marrying her off. However, Bishamber Nath was not aware of these 'flaws' of Bholi. So when he proposed to Ramlal, he readily accepted fearing that if he rejected the proposal, Bholi

would remain unmarried all her life. She would then be a burden on her parents. Thus, Ramlal felt lucky to have a groom like Bishamber Nath for his daughter.

6. Bholi's father was worried about her. Why didn't Bholi's parents treat her at par with other siblings? Parents are the ones who the children look up to. What values should the parents possess that help their children share a strong bond with them?

Ans: When Bholi was ten months old, she fell down from a cot. This damaged a part of her brain and affected her intelligence and speech. She became a slow learner and started speaking with a stammer. So she was called Bholi or a simpleton. Besides, at the age of two, she got an attack of smallpox which left pockmarks on her face, making her ugly. This was her father's worry. She was ill-treated and ignored by her family. She remained backwards and neglected. She never got new clothes. The old dresses of her sisters were passed onto her. No one cared to mend or wash her clothes, put oil in her hair or comb them properly. She was never able to understand the reason for such differences. She could never connect herself with her parents. The values that children share with their parents were missing from them. She got these values from her teacher. She became an obedient and well-behaved daughter of her parents.

7. The story, 'Bholi' throws light on some social evils being practised in our society. Bholi took a stand and succeeded in overcoming social barriers. What can you contribute to change the social attitudes illustrated in the story?

Ans: Bholi was an ill-treated and ignored child. She had pockmarks on her face, making her ugly. She was also a slow learner, a retarded child and also stammered while talking. Her parents always neglected her and she was a nuisance for them. When she grew up, the parents received a marriage proposal for her from Bishamber. He was a lame, old widower with grown-up children. Her parents were happy to get the proposal. At the time of marriage, when Bishamber saw pockmarks on Bholi's face, he asked a dowry of ` 5,000 to marry her. Bholi's father agreed. This aroused the self-respect of Bholi and she refused to marry such a greedy, mean and heartless, lame, old man. Her behaviour revealed that she took a stand and succeeded in overcoming the social barriers. She announced to remain a spinster and to never marry.

We can also contribute to change the social attitudes by educating our girls. We should make them self-confident and independent. We can all follow the norm 'each one teach one' to eradicate illiteracy and spread awareness, as only education guarantees a better future.

8. Bholi's teacher was not an ordinary teacher. She was more than that. Suppose you become a teacher. What qualities of Bholi's teacher will you imbibe to help students to overcome social discrimination?

Ans: If I become a teacher, I would install all the qualities that Bholi's teacher has, to help students overcome social discrimination.

Bholi was sent to school because of her ugly face and lack of intelligence; she had little chance of getting a match. "Let the teachers at school worry about her", said her mother.

Her teacher worked on her as an artist. She motivated and encouraged her, instilled in her traits of self-confidence, self-respect and courage. Education and the teacher's efforts produced wonderful results. She stopped stammering. She hoped to be respected after completing her education. Her teacher was a caring, affectionate, kind lady who brought change in her life. She built-up Bholi's confidence and self-respect. Only because of her teacher's instincts, she could have the courage to refuse to marry a mean, greedy, lame old man.

9. Describe the teacher's role in moulding the life of Bholi.

Ans: Bholi was sent to school because with her ugly face and lack of intelligence, she had little chance of getting a match. "Let the teachers at school worry about her", said her mother. Bholi was unwilling to go because she thought that she was being sold and turned out of the house like her cow Lakshmi. She was given clean clothes to wear for the first time. Her visit to school proved a turning point in the life of this neglected girl. Her teacher worked on her as an artist. She spoke to her lovingly and sweetly in her soft, soothing voice. She consoled and encouraged her to speak without a stammer. She raised in her the hope of a new and respectable life. Education and the teacher's efforts produced wonderful results. The teacher played a key role in Bholi's life. She made her a confident, bold and self-respecting person. The teacher realised that the frightened girl only needed some tenderness, care and encouragement.

Education gave her strength, knowledge and understanding. From a fool, she became an enlightened girl.

Self-Assessment Test

Short Answer Questions

1. What were the two steps taken by Ramlal to persuade Bishamber to marry Bholi?
 2. What did Sulekha later on come to be known as?
 3. Why did Bholi not want to go to school first? What did she realise later?
 4. Why did Ramlal send Bholi to school?
 5. What happened when the teacher asked Bholi her name?
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Long Answer Questions

1. In the light of the chapter, how far would you agree that “education is really an eye-opener”.
2. Discuss the role of Bholi’s teacher in transforming her.
3. What changes do we find in the behaviour of Bholi in the end of the story? Explain.