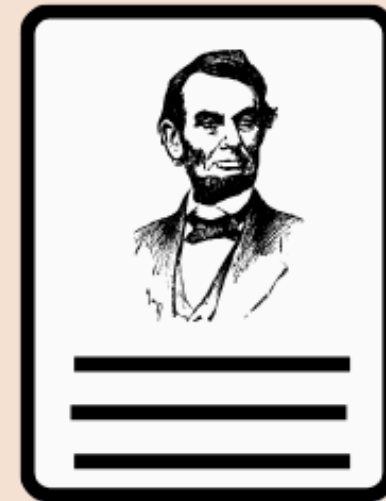


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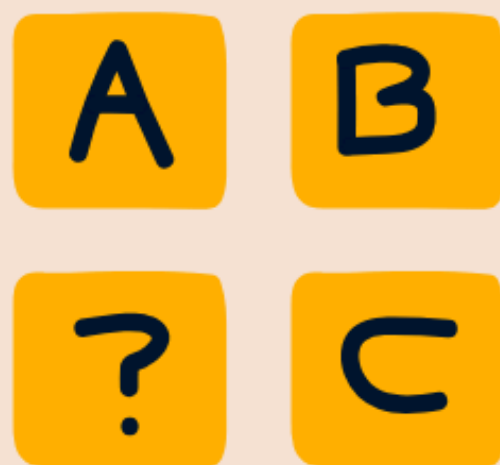
# English Notes



**Full  
Explanations**



**Character  
Sketch**



**Word  
Meanings**



**Tone, Central  
idea, devices....**

**Footprints without Feet**

## 8. Bholi

### Chapter Explanation

In Bholi, K. A. Abbas presents the transformation of a neglected and underestimated girl into a **self-respecting** and **courageous young woman**. Her real name is Sulekha, meaning one with good qualities, but she is called Bholi, meaning a **simpleton**, due to her childhood head injury, smallpox scars, and stammer. Because of these, she is mocked and ignored, becoming timid and silent. Though she belongs to a prosperous family, she receives little affection, showing **social bias** and **gender inequality**.

A turning point comes when a girls' school opens in the village. Under pressure from the Tehsildar, her father sends her to school, not out of care but because she is considered a burden. Initially afraid of being sold like Lakshmi (cow), Bholi soon feels valued when she is **cleaned** and **dressed properly**. At school, the teacher treats her with **kindness** and **patience**. Instead of mocking her, she encourages her and gives her **confidence**. This moment awakens hope and self-worth in Bholi. She feels as if all the bells of the temples are ringing at the same time.

With time, Bholi changes through education, though her parents remain bound by old thinking. They fix her marriage with Bishamber Nath, an **older, limping man**, only because he is **wealthy and doesn't demand dowry**. Bholi agrees silently for her parents' sake.

The climax occurs on the wedding day when Bishamber demands **dowry** after seeing her **pock-marked face**. At this moment, Bholi transforms completely. Speaking clearly and confidently, she refuses to marry him and calls him greedy and cowardly. This is deeply ironic, as the girl once considered foolish becomes the wisest person present. She even opposed a woman who was surprised by this act of "**dumb driven cow**".

At the end, she decides to remain independent, serve her parents, and become a teacher. Her return to the name Sulekha symbolizes the recovery of her true identity. The story highlights the power of education in bringing dignity and courage.

### Detailed Character Sketches

#### **Bholi**

Bholi is initially timid, neglected, and fearful due to her physical and speech problems. However, she is not weak by nature. With education and encouragement, she gains confidence and self-respect. Her refusal to marry Bishamber shows courage and independence. By the end, she becomes Sulekha again, representing dignity and self-realization.

### **Bholi's Teacher**

The teacher is kind, patient, and supportive. She treats Bholi with respect and **encourages her gently**. Her teaching builds Bholi's confidence and removes her fear. She represents true education that develops **personality** and **self-worth**.

### **Ramlal**

Ramlal is a socially conditioned father. Though not cruel, he is weak and influenced by **societal pressure**. He values marriage over his daughter's happiness and **fails to oppose injustice**. He represents ordinary society bound by tradition.

### **Bishamber Nath**

Bishamber Nath is greedy, selfish, and cowardly. He agrees to marry Bholi for benefit and demands dowry at the last moment. His actions expose the **evil of dowry** and **false respectability**.

## **Central Message**

THE STORY SHOWS THAT EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO EMPOWERMENT. IT TEACHES THAT SELF-RESPECT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SOCIAL APPROVAL. IT ALSO EXPOSES EVILS LIKE DOWRY, GENDER DISCRIMINATION, AND FORCED MARRIAGE. TRUE EDUCATION GIVES COURAGE TO STAND AGAINST INJUSTICE.

## **Narrator's Tone**

The tone is **sympathetic, critical, and ironic**. It shows compassion for Bholi while criticizing society's narrow thinking. The irony lies in the transformation of the "simple" girl into the strongest character.

## **Word Meanings**

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Simpleton – foolish person.             | 16. Stammer – speech difficulty.      |
| 2. Numberdar – village revenue officer.    | 17. Astonished – surprised.           |
| 3. Matted – tangled.                       | 18. Auspicious – favourable.          |
| 4. Squatted – sat on heels.                | 19. Pomp – showy display.             |
| 5. Scurried – moved quickly.               | 20. Splendour – grand beauty.         |
| 6. Ginning – separating cotton from seeds. | 21. Veil – cloth covering face.       |
| 7. Downcast – looking down.                | 22. Contempt – lack of respect.       |
| 8. Apprehensions – fears.                  | 23. Thunderstruck – shocked.          |
| 9. Disfigured – spoiled appearance.        | 24. Izzat – honour.                   |
| 10. Mimicked – copied mockingly.           | 25. Contemptible – deserving hatred.  |
| 11. Prosperous – wealthy.                  | 26. Heartless – without kindness.     |
| 12. Representative – acting for others.    | 27. Masterpiece – work of great skill |
| 13. Decent – proper.                       |                                       |
| 14. Fear-laden – full of fear.             |                                       |
| 15. Soothing – calming.                    |                                       |

## Reference Information

1. Real name: Sulekha; "Bholi" means simpleton.
2. Cause of backwardness: Head injury in childhood.
3. Smallpox effect: Permanent pock-marks on her face.
4. Speech problem: Began speaking late and stammered.
5. Family background: Daughter of Numberdar Ramlal; neglected despite prosperity.
6. Unequal treatment: Sons educated; daughters prepared for marriage.
7. Reason for school: Sent due to pressure and convenience, not care.
8. Fear of school: Thought she might be abandoned like the cow **Lakshmi**.
9. First care: Clean clothes and bath made her feel valued.
10. Classroom: Colourful pictures and friendly environment.
11. Teacher's role: **Encouragement, patience, and kindness**. She persuaded Bholi that once she will become the most educated person of village, everyone will listen to her.
12. Village change: Develops into a small town over time.
13. Marriage reason: Bishamber's wealth and no dowry demand initially.
14. Marriage reality: Much older, **limping**, already with children.
15. Wedding scene: Grand procession with hidden greed.
16. Dowry demand: **Five thousand** rupees at last moment.
17. Symbol of honour: Ramlal's turban placed at groom's feet.
18. Major conflict: Individual vs society; **woman vs patriarchy**.
19. Empowerment: The **dumb driven cow speaks**.
20. Celebration: When Bishamber was returning alone, the people from band thought as the marriage was over and they started playing music.
21. Future: Numberdar Ramlal was worried about Bholi's future. She assured him that she will work as a teacher in the school she studied in, and care for her parents.

### Literary devices:

**Irony** – "foolish" girl proves wise.

**Metaphor** – "dumb cow."

**Simile** – hand "like a streak of lightning."

**Imagery** – classroom, wedding, temple bells.

**Title significance:** "Bholi" becomes ironic as she proves intelligent and brave.

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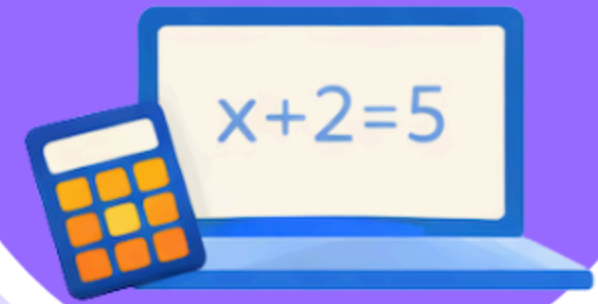
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