

4.2 Bholi

Warming up!

Chit-Chat

1. Discuss the following in your groups.
 - (a) Various social evils that exist in • big cities • small towns • villages.
2. Very few youngsters like to take up social work as a career. Discuss reasons why they do not take it up seriously.

1. Adjectives and some Adverbs can be used in three degrees of comparison.

Positive - For example, cold, tall, heavy, fast, beautiful, little

Comparative - For example, colder, taller, heavier, faster, more beautiful, less

Superlative - For example, coldest, tallest, heaviest, fastest, most beautiful, least

Fill in the Table

	Positive	Comparative	Superlative
1.	simple	.....	.....
2.	.....	prettier	.....
3.	.....	.....	deepest
4.	intelligent	.....	.....
5.	.....	better	.....
6.	.....	.....	most affectionate
7.	young	.....	.....
8.	.....	nearer	.....
9.	.....	.....	quickest
10.	.....	.....	most

2. Pick out Hindi words used in the story written in English. Give their English alternative.
 - (a) Bholi - simpleton
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)
 - (e)
3. Write three advantages and three drawbacks for each of the following.

	Advantages	Drawbacks
City Life	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
Village Life	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

Bholi

K.A.Abbas (1914-1987) was an Indian film director, novelist, screenwriter and a journalist in the Urdu, Hindi and English languages. His films won National Awards. He is considered one of the pioneers of Indian parallel or neo-realistic cinema. His column 'Last Page' holds the distinction of being one of the longest running column in the history of Indian Journalism.

Part I

Her name was Sulekha but since her childhood everyone had been calling her Bholi the simpleton.

She was the fourth daughter of Numberdar Ramlal. When she was ten months old, she had fallen off the cot on her head and perhaps it had damaged some part of her brain. That was why she remained a backward child and came to be known as Bholi, the **simpleton**.

At birth the child was very fair and pretty. But when she was two years old. She had an attack of small pox. Only the eyes were saved. But the entire body was permanently **disfigured** by deep black **pockmarks**. Little Sulekha could not speak till she was five and when at last she learnt to speak, she **stammered**. The other children often made fun of her and mimicked her. As a result, she talked very little.

Ramlal had seven children, three sons and four daughters and the youngest of them was Bholi. It was a prosperous farmer's household and there was plenty to eat and drink. All the children except Bholi were healthy and strong. The sons had been sent to the city to study in schools and later in colleges. Of the daughters Radha, the eldest had already been married. The second daughter Mangla's marriage had also been settled Ramlal would think of third Champa. They were good looking, healthy girls. And it was not difficult to find bridegrooms for them.

But Ramlal was worried about Bholi. She had neither good looks nor intelligence.

- **simpleton** : one who can be easily deceived to believe anything
- **Numberdar** : an official who collects revenue

- **disfigured** : spoiled

Think and discuss:

- ◆ appearance of Bholi
- ◆ Ramlal's decision to admit her to school

- **pockmarks** : permanent marks left on the skin
- **stammer** : speech defect

Bholi was seven years old when Mangla was married. The same year a primary school for girls was opened in their village. The Tehsildar sahib came to perform its opening ceremony. He said to Ramlal, “As a revenue official you are the representative of the government in the village and so you must set an example to the villagers. You must send your daughter to school.”

That night when Ramlal consulted his wife. She cried, “Are you crazy? If girls go to school, who will marry them?”

But Ramlal had not the courage to disobey the Tehsildar. At last his wife said, “I will tell you what to do. Send Bholi to school. As it is there is little chance of her getting married, with her ugly face and lack of sense. Let the teachers at school worry about her.”

The next day Ramlal caught Bholi by the hand and said. “Come with me. I will take you to school.” Bholi was frightened. She did not know what a school was like. She remembered how a few days ago their old cow. Lakshmi had been turned out of the house and sold.

“N-n-n-n No. no-no-no” she shouted in terror and pulled her hand away from her father’s grip.

“What’s the matter with you, you fool?” shouted Ramlal, “I am only taking you to school.” Then he told his wife. “Let her wear some decent clothes today. Or else what will the teachers and the other schoolgirls think of us when they see her?”

New clothes had never been made for Bholi. The old dresses of her sisters were passed on to her. No one cared to mend or wash her clothes. But today she was lucky to receive a clean dress which had shrunk after many washing and no longer fitted Champa. She was even bathed and oil was rubbed into her dry and **matted** hair. Only then did she begin to believe that she was being taken to a place better than her home!

When they reached the school, the children were already in their classrooms. Ramlal handed over his daughter to the headmistress. Left alone, the poor girl

♦ Why did Ramlal’s wife oppose sending Bholi to school?

♦ What shows that Bholi was unwilling to go to school?

♦ How did Bholi’s parents change her appearance?

• **matted** : entangled

looked about her with fear laden eyes. There were several rooms. And in each room girls like her **squatted** on mats, reading from books or writing on slates. The headmistress asked Bholi to sit down in a corner in one of the classrooms.

Bholi did not know what exactly a school was like and what happened there. But she was glad to find so many girls almost of her own age present there. She hoped that one of these girls might become her friend.

The lady teacher who was in the class was saying something to the girls but Bholi could understand nothing. She looked at the pictures on the wall. The colours fascinated her. The horse was brown just like the horse on which the Tehsildar had come to visit their village: the goat was black like the goat of their neighbour: the parrot was green like the parrots she had seen in the mango orchard: and the cow was just like their Lakshmi. And suddenly Bholi noticed that the teacher was standing by her side, smiling at her.

“What’s your name. little one?”

“Bh-Bho-Bho.” She could stammer no further than that.

Then she began to cry and tears flowed from her eyes **in a helpless flood**. She kept her head down as she sat in her corner, not daring to look up at the girls who, she knew were still laughing at her.

When the school bell rang. All the girls **scurried** out of the classroom. But Bholi dared not leave her corner. Her head still lowered. She kept on sobbing.

“Bholi.”

The teacher’s voice was so soft and soothing! In all her life she had never been called like that. It touched her heart.

“Get up.” said the teacher. It was not a command, but just a friendly suggestion. Bholi got up.

“Now tell me your name.”

Sweat broke out over her whole body. Would her stammering tongue again disgrace her? For the sake

- **squatted** : sat on their heels

- ✦ What made the class attractive to Bholi?

- ✦ Why did Bholi feel ashamed?

- **in a helpless flood** : uncontrolled flow of tears

- **scurried** : ran or moved away in a hurry

- ✦ How would you describe the teacher’s attitude towards Bholi? Give 3 to 4 points.



- ✦ Which words could Bholi utter whole?
- ✦ How did the teacher encourage Bholi to overcome her stammering?

of this kind woman. However she decided to make an effort. She had such a soothing voice: she would not laugh at her.

“Bh-Bh-Bho-Bho-,” she began to stammer.

“Well done, well done.” The teacher encouraged her. “Come on now – the full name?”

“Bh-Bh-Bho-Bholi.” At last she was able to say it and felt relieved as if it was a great achievement.

“Well done.” The teacher patted her affectionately and said. “Put the fear out of your heart and you will be able to speak like everyone else.”

Bholi looked up as if to ask. ‘Really?’

“Yes, yes, it will be very easy. You just come to school everyday, will you come?”

Bholi nodded.

“No. say it aloud.”

“Ye-Ye-Yes.” And Bholi herself was astonished that she had been able to say it.

“Didn’t I tell you? Now take this book.”

The book was full of nice pictures and the pictures were in colour dog, cat, goat, house, parrot, tiger and a cow just like Lakshmi. And with every picture was a word in big black letters.

“In one month you will be able to read this book. Then I will give you a bigger book, then a still bigger one. In time you will be more learned

than anyone else in the village. Then no one will ever be able to laugh at you. People will listen to you with respect and you will be able to speak without the slightest stammer. Understand? Now go home, and come back early tomorrow morning”

Bholi felt as if suddenly all the bells in the village temple were ringing and the trees in front of the school house had blossomed into big red flowers. Her heart was throbbing with a new hope and a new life.

Part II

Thus the years passed.

The village became a small town. The little primary school became high school. There were now a cinema under a tin shed and a cotton **ginning** mill. The mail train began to stop at their railway station.

One night, after dinner, Ramlal said to his wife, “Then, shall I accept Bishamber’s proposal?”

“Yes, certainly” his wife said. “Bholi will be lucky to get such a well to do bridegroom. A big shop, a house of his own and I hear several thousands in the bank. Moreover, he is not asking for any dowry”.

“That’s right, but he is not so young, you know—almost the same age as I am—and he also limps. Moreover, the children from his first wife are quite grown up”.

“So what does it matter?” his wife replied. “Forty five or fifty—it is no great age for a man. We are lucky that he is from another village and does not know about her pockmarks and her lack of sense. If we don’t accept this proposal, she may remain unmarried all her life.”

“Yes, but I wonder what Bholi will say”.

“What will that witless one say? She is like a dumb cow.”

“May be you are right”, muttered Ramlal.

In the other corner of the courtyard, Bholi lay awake on her cot, and listened to her parents’ whispered conversation.

- **ginning** : separating raw cotton from its seeds

- ✦ What were the drawbacks of Bishamber, as a bridegroom?

- ✦ Why were Bholi’s parents eager to accept Bishamber’s proposal for marriage?

• **envious** : jealous

• **poised** : in a fixed position

✦ Why did the bridegroom refuse to garland Bholi?

• **humiliate** : put to shame

Bishamber Nath was a well-to-do grocer. He came with a big party of friends and relations with him for the wedding. A brass band playing a popular tune from an Indian film headed the procession, with the bridegroom riding a decorated horse. Ramlal was overjoyed to see such pomp and splendour. He had never dreamt that his fourth daughter would have such a grand wedding. Bholi's elder sisters who had come for the occasion were **envious** of her luck.

When the auspicious moment came the priest said, "Bring the bride".

Bholi, clad in a red silken bridal dress, was led to bride's place near the sacred fire.

"Garland the bride," one of his friends prompted Bishamber Nath.

The bridegroom lifted the garland of yellow marigolds. A woman slipped back the silken veil from the bride's face. Bishamber took a quick glance. The garland remained **poised** in his hands. The bride slowly pulled down the veil over her face.

"Have you seen her?" said Bishamber to the friend next to him. "She has pockmarks on her face."

"So what? You are not young either."

"Maybe. But if I am to marry her, her father must give me five thousand rupees."

Ramlal went and placed his turban – his honour – at Bishamber's feet. "Do not **humiliate** me so. Take two thousand rupees."

"No. Five thousand, or we go back. Keep your daughter."

"Be a little considerate, please. If you go back, I can never show my face in the village."

"Then out with five thousand."

Tears streaming down his face, Ramlal went in, opened the safe and counted out the notes. He placed the bundle at the bridegroom's feet.

On Bishamber's greedy face appeared a triumphant smile. He had gambled and won. "Give me the garland," he announced.

Once again the veil was slipped back from the bride face but this time her eyes were not **downcast**. She was looking up, looking straight at her **prospective** husband, and in her eyes there was neither anger nor hate, only cold **contempt**.

Bishamber raised the garland to place it round the bride's neck but before he could do so, Bholi's hand struck out like a streak of lightning and garland was flung into the fire. She got up and threw away the veil.

"Pitaji" said Bholi in a clear loud voice; and her father, mother, sisters, brothers, relations and neighbours were **startled** to hear her speak without even the slightest stammer.

"Pitaji", take back your money. I am not going to marry this man."

Ramlal was thunderstruck. The guests began to whisper, "So shameless! So ugly and so shameless!"

"Bholi, are you crazy?" shouted Ramlal. "You want to disgrace your family? Have some regard for out *izzat*!"

"For the sake of your *izzat*," said Bholi, "I was willing to marry this lame old man. But I will not have such a **mean**, greedy and **contemptible** coward as my husband. I won't, I won't, I won't."

What a shameless girl! We all thought she was a harmless dumb cow."

Bholi turned violently on the old woman, "Yes, Aunty, you are right. You all thought I was a dumb-driven cow. That's why you wanted to hand me over to this heartless creature. But now the dumb cow, the stammering fool, is speaking. Do you want to hear more?"

Bishamber Nath, the grocer, started to go back with his party. The confused bandsmen thought this was the end of the ceremony and struck up a closing song.

Ramlal stood rooted to the ground, his head bowed low with the weight of grief and shame.

The flames of the sacred fire slowly died down.

- **downcast** : looking downwards

- ◆ What was the expression on Bholi's face?

- **prospective** : future

- **contempt** : hatred

- **startled** : shocked

- ◆ What shocked the family members?

- **mean** : wicked

- **contemptible** : hateful

- ◆ Besides the humiliation and grief, what was Ramlal afraid of?



Everyone was gone. Ramlal turned to Bholi and said, “But what about you, no one will ever marry you now. What shall we do with you?”

And Sulekha said in a voice that was calm and steady, “Don’t you worry, “Pitaji! In your old age I will serve you and mother and I will teach in the same school where I learnt so much. Isn’t that right, Ma’am?”

The teacher had all along stood in a corner, watching the drama. “Yes, Bholi, of course,” she replied. And in her smiling eyes was the light of a deep satisfaction that an artist feels when **contemplating** the completion of her masterpiece.

– K. A. Abbas

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Complete the following sentences using the words given in the brackets.

(contemplating, humiliate, scurried, disfigured, envious, contemptible, matted, startled)

- After the accident, Juhi’s face was
- It took a long time to straighten the bundle of wool.
- After class, students out for their lunch-break.
- One should never the disabled people.
- Nutan was of her sister, who won the ‘Best Singer’ award.
- Corruption is a act.
- We are seriously about buying a new apartment.
- I was to see a snake in my room.

2. The story focusses on some social problems and evil practices that are prevailing in the society. Read the text carefully and make a list of all social problems and evil practices. Discuss in the class to find some solutions to these problems. One is done for you.

Social problems and evil practices	Probable Solutions
1. Discrimination between a boy child and girl child.	1. Both must be treated equal at family, school and society levels
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

3. Fill in the boxes with proper letters so as to find various characters in the story by their specialities. One is done for you.

(a)

N	u	m	b	e	r	d	a	r
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

(b)

T			c			
---	--	--	---	--	--	--

(c)

		h				d		
--	--	---	--	--	--	---	--	--

(d)

		a	d								s
--	--	---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---

(e)

	a		h		
--	---	--	---	--	--

(f)

	e				h						r
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4. Glance through the story again and describe Bholi's character before and after her meeting with the teacher. Complete the table and then write two paragraphs describing the change seen in her character. One is done for you.

Before	After
1. She was called simpleton, children made fun of her and mimicked her.	1. She became confident and was able to utter her name.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

5. Find synonyms from the story for the following words.

humiliate, repair, attracted, surely, fortunate, contentment

6. Expand the proverb in about 12 to 15 lines, 'Where there is a will, there is a way.'

Steps :

1. Explanation of the proverb in simple words.
2. Examples/Experiences to prove the proverbs.
3. Conclusion

7. Read the extract beginning from –

“Her name was Sulekha..... find bridegrooms for them.” Narrate this extract in short, making Sulekha (Bholi) the narrator. Write it in your notebook. Begin with “I was named Sulekha”

8. Interview

Prepare a set of 10-12 questions that you would ask at an interview of a person who has strongly acted against social injustice and has achieved success inspite of a long struggle against so many odds in his/her life. Write them down in your notebook.

Language Study

1. Rewrite the following in Indirect speech. Do it in your notebook.

- “Put the fear out of your heart and you will be able to speak like everyone else”. Bholi looked up as if to ask, “Really?”
- “Yes, certainly,” his wife said, “Bholi will be lucky to get such a well-to-do bridgeroom.”
- “What will that witless one say? She is like a dumb cow.” May be you are right.” muttered Ramlal.
- “Be a little considerate, please. If you go back, I can never show my face in the village.” “Then out with five thousand.”
- “Pitaji”, Take back your money, I am not going to marry this man.” “Bholi, are you crazy?” shouted Ramlal.

2. Rewrite the sentences given below as per the given Degree of Comparison without change of meaning.

- You are not as young as she is. (Comparative Degree)
- His fourth daughter’s wedding was the grandest of all. (Positive)
- Bholi was younger than all his other daughters. (Superlative)

3. Correct the errors in the following sentences. Focus on verbs and subject.

- All children, except Bholi, was healthy and strong.
- Since childhood, everyone will have calling her Bholi.
- If girls goes to school, who will marry them?
- New clothes was never made for Bholi.
- The garland were flung into the fire.
- Do you wants to hear more?
- Aren’t that right?
- I will teaches in the same school.

