

# Footprints Without Feet

## (Class X – NCERT)

### Chapter 8: Bholi – K.A. Abbas

#### Detailed Summary (Expanded, Exam-Oriented)

The story follows Sulekha, nicknamed Bholi (simpleton), who suffers a head injury and smallpox, leaving her mentally slow and facially scarred. She also develops a stammer. Neglected by her family, she is sent to school only because they consider her unmarriageable. A kind teacher transforms her life through education, giving her confidence and reducing her stammering. Years later, when a greedy groom demands extra dowry after seeing her pockmarks, Bholi refuses to marry him, choosing dignity over social acceptance. She decides to become a teacher and remain independent, demonstrating that education empowers even the most marginalized.

#### Central Themes

##### 1. Education Empowers

Education transforms Bholi from a neglected, stammering girl into a confident woman who knows her worth.

##### 2. Dowry System Critique

The story exposes the evil of dowry and how it commodifies marriage and degrades women.

##### 3. Self-Respect vs Social Acceptance

Bholi chooses dignity over marriage, valuing self-respect above traditional expectations.

##### 4. Inner Worth vs Appearance

Physical appearance does not determine value - Bholi's worth lies in her character and dignity.

#### Character Sketches

##### 1. Bholi

Transforms from neglected, simple-minded girl to confident, articulate woman through education. Shows courage in rejecting a humiliating marriage.

##### 2. The Teacher

Kind, patient educator who sees potential where others see only deficiency. Changes Bholi's life through dedication.

### 3. Bishamber

Greedy groom who represents exploitation and the worst aspects of dowry system.

### Important Vocabulary (With Meanings)

- **Simpleton** – a simple-minded person
- **Pockmarks** – scars from smallpox
- **Numberdar** – village revenue officer
- **Dowry** – money given by bride's family
- **Stammering** – speaking with pauses

### Exam-Ready Key Points

- Bholi suffers head injury and smallpox, becoming mentally slow and scarred
- Sent to school only because considered unmarriageable
- Kind teacher transforms her through education
- Refuses to marry greedy groom who demands extra dowry
- Chooses dignity and independence over humiliating marriage
- Decides to become teacher - education empowers the marginalized