



Grade IX

Lesson 10 : The Beggar

- Anton Chekhov

Supplementary Reader

Soul of the Chapter

This is a story about a beggar Lushkoff who used to beg posing as a school teacher or a student. He meets an advocate Sergei who offers him a job at his house. Sergei asked Lushkoff to chop woods for him. He asked his servant, Olga, to look after him. Lushkoff was very weak. He could not do any hard work. Olga found him incapable of chopping the wood. She rebuked him but she was very sympathetic to him. She wept for him. Olga decided to help him. She worked in his place and informed Sergei that he had done his work. She made him get half a rouble.

Sergei asked Lushkoff to come to work on the first of every month. Lushkoff was always rebuked by Olga for his inefficiency. But it was Olga only who helped him in his work.

Once Sergei asked Lushkoff to help in the shifting of house. He looked weak and unhealthy. Sergei thought that he should not put him to hard work and decided to send him to his friend for an easier job. Lushkoff got a more respectable job.

After two years, Sergei met Lushkoff in a theatre. He was well dressed and looked healthier. He had become a notary and was earning thirty-five roubles a month.

Sergei felt good. Lushkoff thanked Sergei for his kind words and deeds. He disclosed that it was Olga who helped and set him right. He would never forget her. Olga's words and actions had brought a change in him. She made him quit drinking.

Lushkoff expressed his gratitude to Sergei and Olga. He bid him goodbye and departed for work.



## NCERT Questions

### Think About It

**1. Has Lushkoff become a beggar by circumstances or by choice?**

No, Lushkoff did not become a beggar by choice. He was the victim of circumstances. In fact, he was a singer in the Russian choir. This middle-aged man was a habitual drunkard. He was shunted out from his job due to his habit of getting drunk. His physical inability forced him to turn to begging.

**2. What reasons does he give to Sergei for his telling lies?**

Lushkoff admits that he has been telling lies everywhere. He says that he tells lies to get money. If he tells the truth that he was thrown out of job because of his drinking habits, nobody will give him money.

**3. Is Lushkoff a willing worker? Why, then, does he agree to chop wood for Sergei?**

No, Lushkoff is not a willing worker. He is physically weak. He can do nothing except begging. But he is trapped in his own words said to Sergei. He has to agree to chop wood for Sergei to save his face.

**4. Sergei says, "I am happy my words have taken effect." Why does he say so? Is he right in saying this?**

When Sergei shifted to another house, he hired Lushkoff to help in packing and hauling of the furniture. He paid him and remarked that he was happy he had learn to earn through work.

But Sergei was not right in his assessment. Lushkoff was still an idle person. In fact, he was too weak to do any work.

**5. Lushkoff is earning thirty-five roubles a month. How is he obliged to Sergei for this? What value is displayed in the act of Lushkoff?**

Lushkoff was only a beggar, telling lies to get money. Sergei scolded him for all this and offered him the work of chopping wood for him. He was unable to do physical labour due to his drinking habit. Sergei sent him to his friend with a letter to work as a copying clerk. Now Lushkoff had become a notary and was earning thirty-five roubles a month. He was obliged to Sergei for giving him an opportunity to lead an



honest and self-respecting life. Lushkoff is grateful to Sergei for his help and guidance. Thus, gratitude and gratefulness are the values displayed by Lushkoff.

## Solved Question Bank

### Short Answer Type Questions

#### 1. Where did Sergei send Lushkoff? What advice did he give him?

Sergei found that Lushkoff was not fit for physical labour. He decided to give him some cleaner and simpler job. He sent him to an office where his job was to copy the documents. He advised him to work hard and not to drink.

#### 2. Where did Sergei see Lushkoff after two years? What work was he doing then?

After two years, Sergei met Lushkoff in a theatre. Sergei found him well dressed and in a very happy state of mind. At that time, he was working as a notary. His income was thirty-five roubles every month.

#### 3. How did Olga save Lushkoff?

Lushkoff was not physically well. He was too weak to work. He could not chop wood. Olga had pity on him and worked in his place. This is how Olga helped him in saving his job and earning money.

#### 4. How did Sergei come to remember that he had met the beggar before?

When Sergei was addressed by Lushkoff, his eyes fell on his shoes, one of which was high and the other low. He suddenly remembered that he had seen him before.

#### 5. Who was Olga? What did Sergei ask her to do?

Olga was a cook in the house of Sergei. Sergei wanted to give some work to Lushkoff. He brought him home. Sergei requested Olga to take Lushkoff into the woodshed and let him chop wood.

#### 6. What was Lushkoff in reality?

In reality, Lushkoff belonged to a Russian choir. He was sacked from that job because of his drinking habit. He pretended to be a school teacher or a student to earn some money through begging.





### **7. What cleaner job did Sergei provide to Lushkoff?**

Sergei realised that Lushkoff was too weak to do any physical labour. He provided him a job in an office. The job was to make copies of documents. This job needed only writing skill which he had. This was a cleaner job for him.

### **8. Why did Sergei call Lushkoff his 'Godson'?**

Sergei helped Lushkoff in mending his ways. Now Lushkoff was no more a beggar. He was working as a notary and earning a handsome salary. Sergei was proud of himself for making Lushkoff a respectable person. So he called him his Godson.

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### **Long Answer Type Questions**

#### **1. Bad habits ruin a person. Lushkoff turned to begging because of his drinking habit. How does this habit ruin him? What lesson do you learn from his life?**

Lushkoff was a middle-aged man. He was a beggar. He used to beg in a polished manner. Once he pretended to be a school teacher. Next time he presented himself as a student. In fact, he was a singer in a Russian Choir. He was sent away for his drunkenness. He was sent away for his drunkenness. He was a man ruined by his drinking habit which turned him to begging. His drinking habit made him physically and mentally incapable. He was so weak that he could not do any work offered by Olga or Sergei. He had to compromise with his self-respect. He had to feel ashamed of his habits. He had to beg. Bad habits initially may give pleasure, which is temporary but they bring disrepute, humiliation and ruin to a person in the long run.

#### **2. What was the first work assigned to Lushkoff? What value did Sergei want to teach him?**

Lushkoff, the beggar, asked Sergei if he could do some work. Sergei took the burden of providing work to him. He offered him his first task. It was to chop wood. The beggar accepted the job reluctantly. Sergei asked his cook, Olga, to take him to the woodshed and let him chop the wood. But due to his ill health, he could not do the work. But Olga reported to Sergei that he had completed the job. Sergei asked Olga to give Lushkoff half a rouble. Sergei wanted to teach the value of dignity of labour to Lushkoff. He wanted him to get money for work in a dignified way. Olga found him to be incapable of work and helped him.





- 3. What changed did Sergei notice in Lushkoff when he met him after two years? How did Olga help him? According to you, what changed him? Do you think positivity of Olga helped him?**

After two years, Sergei noticed Lushkoff beside him at the ticket window of a theatre, wearing good clothes and a cap. Lushkoff was a notary then and was earning thirty-five roubles a month. He thanked Sergei for his present position. He revealed that Olga had saved him. She scolded and abused him but she also suffered and shed tears for his sake. It was Olga who chopped wood for him. Owing to her words and noble deeds, a change had taken place in his heart. She set him right and forced him to change his profession and lead a dignified life. Yes, it was the compassion, motivation, sympathy and realisation of importance of hard work shown by Olga that helped Lushkoff. Now he was living a dignified life. Positivity of Olga, her patience and cooperation transformed a beggar into a dignified, successful professional.

- 4. "Don't offer a friend fish to a hungry boy, help him learn how to catch and fry a fish." Do you think Sergei believed in this statement? What would have happened to Lushkoff if Sergei had given him money rather than offering him work?**

The best way to help a needy person is to help him in learning a trade. If we keep on offering food to a beggar, he/she becomes a permanent beggar. We should always try to find a work for them so that they learn to earn and live a dignified life. When Lushkoff approached Sergei, he was a beggar. Sergei could have given him money but he wanted him to work to live a dignified life. His help in the form of money would have made him a permanent beggar living a miserable life. But his offer of work changed his life forever. So it is true that we should not offer a fried fish to a hungry boy, we should help him learn how to catch and fry a fish.

- 5. Lushkoff goes through various experiences in life as narrated in the story 'The Beggar'. These experiences bring out several hidden traits in his character. Enumerate at least five of these traits.**

At the start, Lushkoff, through an educated man, was a weakling, given to self-pity, who spent his life begging, by concocting heart-wrenching stories about his condition. He was a drunkard turned away from a Russian choir because of his ways. He lacked will power to overcome his weakness and mend his ways. Lushkoff was insensitive to insults and threats and despite the cook's irritation at his inability to handle the menial task of chopping wood, Lushkoff remained unfazed. Lushkoff was easily influenced by others and thus when the cook despite hurling insults and curses on him, had done his task of chopping the wood, for which Lushkoff was paid, he was a





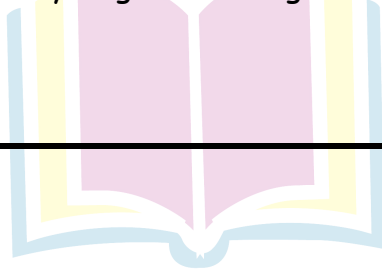
changed person. Lushkoff's mind was receptive to good example and when he saw the cook's behaviour he began to take the first steps towards reforming his ways, till he had completely turned over a new leaf.

**6. Give a character sketch of Sergei.**

Sergei was a middle-aged man. He was a very kind and cooperative person. He always helped the poor. He had very sharp memory. He could easily recognise a person he had seen before. He recognised Lushkoff twice. He was very boastful as well. He always wanted to take credit for any noble work that he had done. He helped Lushkoff in getting some work. He kept on advising him about working hard and not to drink. He never appreciated Lushkoff. In this sense, he was very selfish but his selfishness was for the betterment of other people. He helped Lushkoff in becoming a successful, respectable and well-to-do person. His words were bitter but they acted like medicine for Lushkoff.

**7. Compassion and pity can bring positive changed in a human being. How does the story 'The Beggar' prove it?**

Compassion and pity are the human values that can transform a person completely. To bring about the positive changes in a person with negative character traits, patience and love are required. The story has ample evidence to prove this statement. Olga was a social and sympathetic lady. She had the sense of humanity. She realised the miserable condition of Lushkoff and felt pity for him. She kept criticising him in order to improve him. Lushkoff realised her noble feelings and a change took place in his heart. So, Love and compassion of Olga and Sergei completely changed Lushkoff, a beggar by circumstances. He realised the importance of hard work and was able to live with dignity. It is because of the encouragement and empathy and sympathy shown by Olga and Sergei that brought positive changed in Lushkoff.



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