

The Beggar

by Anton Chekhov

Chapter Overview

This highlights how kindness and compassion can bring about a change in anyone. In the story, Lushkoff a beggar is given work by Sergei, an advocate. Lushkoff agrees to do the work but the work given to him is done by an old woman Olga (Sergei's cook). Her kindness and compassion help bring a change in Lushkoff's way of life. Because of Olga's selfless help, Lushkoff starts living a respectable life and becomes a responsible man.

Summary of the Chapter

Sergei Stopped by a Beggar

One day Sergei, an advocate was stopped by a beggar. The beggar requested Sergei to have pity on him. The Beggar also said that he had ate nothing since last three days. The Beggar told Sergei that he had been a school teacher for eight years but had lost his job about a year ago.

Sergei looked at the beggar. He was wearing a ragged, Fawn (light yellowish) coloured overcoat. He had dull drunken eyes and a red spot on either cheek. The Beggar told Sergei that he had found a job in the province of kaluga and needed money to go there.

Sergei Recognises the Beggar

While talking to the beggar, Sergei recognised him by his shoes. One of the beggar's shoes was high and other was low. Sergei told the beggar that he had met him earlier on Sadovya street and at that time he told him that he was a student. Sergei threatened the beggar that he would call the police.

The Beggar Tells the Truth

After Sergei's threat, the beggar told that he had lied to him for money. He told Sergei that he was in a Russian singing group, but he was thrown out because of his drinking habits. Now, he couldn't find work anywhere and did not have any other option rather than to beg. So, he lied to get money.

Sergei Offers Work to the Beggar

After listening to the beggar's truth, Sergei offered him work of chopping wood. The beggar does not wanted to work, but he agreed because of shame. So, Sergei took the beggar to his home. He called his cook, Olga and informed her to take the beggar into wood-shed. Olga gave the beggar an axe to chop the wood. The Beggar tried to chop the wood but he could'nt do so. Sergei realised that he kept a drunken man who was too weak to work in cold.

Different Types of Work for the Beggar

The wood was chopped after an hour. The Beggar was given money (half a rouble) and informed that he could come to Sergei's house in the starting of the month to get work.

The beggar was given various kinds of work. He would remove the snow, cut wood, clean the rugs and mattresses, etc. When Sergei was shifting into a new house, the beggar was called to help in packing and carrying the furniture.

The beggar looked weak and unhealthy. He hardly help Sergei in carrying the furniture and in shifting. Sergei thought that he should not give him hard work and decided to sent him to his friend for an easy work. After shifting, Sergei called the beggar and got to know that his name was Lushkoff. Sergei gave Lushkoff a letter and told him to go to his friend who would give him a new job.

Sergei Meets Lushkoff after Two Years

After two years on one evening, Sergei met Lushkoff at the theatre. He found Lushkoff near the ticket window. He was wearing a coat collar of curly fur and a sealskin cap. Lushkoff informed Sergei that he had become a notary and was now earning 35 roubles a month. Lushkoff thanked Sergei for his help and guidance. He also thanked Sergei's cook Olga who (according to him) actually changed him.

Lushkoff's Confession

Lushkoff confessed to Sergei that Olga's kindness had changed him. It was Olga who would scold him and cry for him. Lushkoff told Sergei that he did not cut any wood for him. It was Olga who cut the wood. Olga's caring actions changed his heart and helped him become a responsible person.

WORD MEANINGS

The given page nos. correspond to the pages in the prescribed textbook.

Word	Meaning
swear	a solemn declaration by some sacred being or object
lodging	temporary accommodation
copeck	a monetary unit of Russia equal to one-hundredth of a rouble
Intrigues	secret plans made to harm someone
calumny	defamation of character
advocate	lawyer
ragged	(of clothes) old and torn
suppliant	a person making a humble plea to someone in power or authority.
province	district; region
mendicant	a beggar
obliged	bound to do something
overshoes	a shoe worn over a normal shoe, typically made of rubber to protect the normal shoe
expelled	removed
mumble	murmur
flushed	(of a person's skin) red and hot, typically as the result of illness or strong emotions.
disgust	a feeling of dislike for something or someone.
swindling	cheating
damn	an expression highlighting anger or frustration.
formerly	in the past
choir	an organised group of singers

Word	Meaning
drunkenness	intoxication
chop	to cut
skilled	experienced
hasten	to move or act quickly
scarecrow	a person who is very badly dressed, odd-looking, or thin
shrugged	raise shoulders slightly to express doubt
perplexity	confusion
irresolute	hesitant
gait	a person's manner of walking
undermined	lessen the effectiveness, power or ability of someone.
inclination	a tendency
toil	hard work
glared	stare in an angry way
wrathfully	in an extremely angry manner
shoved	push roughly
banged	strike or put down forcefully
pseudo	not genuine
spat (past tense of spit)	eject saliva from one's mouth, sometimes as a gesture of contempt or anger
billet	(here) a thick piece of wood.
feebly	lacking in force
waver	move back and forth
menial	(of work) not requiring much skill and lacking prestige.
Rouble	Russian currency
Waif	a homeless, neglected or abandoned person

Word	Meaning
shovel	move something with a shovel (Shovel is a tool with a long handle used for lifting and throwing dirt, sand, snow, etc.
rug	mat
hauling	pulling or dragging
sober	serious, sensible and dignified
gloomy	sad or depressed
pretence	acting
wagon	a vehicle used for transporting goods
carter	a person who transports goods by a vehicle
jeer	make rude and mocking remarks, typically in a loud voice
tattered	old and torn; in poor condition
parting	leaving
timidly	unconfidently
notary	a person authorised to perform certain legal formalities
delighted	very happy
roasting	severe criticism
grateful	thankful
dragged	pulled
pit	a large hole
noble	having or showing fine personal qualities or high moral principles.
indebted	owing something (such as money or thanks) to someone
sot	a habitual drunkard

Word	Meaning
miserable	being in a pitiable state of distress or unhappiness

Word	Meaning
strain	an outburst filled with emotional speech
owing	due

Word	Meaning
bow	to bend the head or body in respect to someone or something

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Think About it (Page 67, 68)

- Has Lushkoff become a beggar by circumstance or choice?
Ans. Lushkoff became a beggar by choice as he did not want to work. He was a drunkard and was thrown out of the singing group in which he sang, due to his drinking habit.
- What reasons does he give to Sergei for his telling lies?
Ans. Lushkoff told Sergei that nobody would take pity on him. He also told that nobody would give him anything if he told the truth. So, he had to lie to earn money.
- Is Lushkoff a willing worker? Why, then, does he agree to chop wood for Sergei?
Ans. No, Lushkoff was not a willing worker. He agreed to chop wood for Sergei because of shame and guilt. He was trapped in his own words. He had told Sergei that he had to beg because he could not find any work.
- Sergei says, "I am happy that my words have taken effect." Why does he say so? Is he right in saying this?
Ans. Sergei says that on seeing Lushkoff coming to his house regularly for work. By this Sergei means as he had encouraged Lushkoff to leave begging and start working.

No, he is not right in saying so as Lushkoff did not do any work at his place and all his work was done by Olga, Sergei's cook.

- Lushkoff is earning thirty five roubles a month. How is he obliged to Sergei for this?
Ans. Lushkoff is obliged to Sergei for his respectable life. Before meeting Sergei, Lushkoff was a beggar who lied to get money. Sergei offered him work. It was at Sergei's house, where Lushkoff met Olga, a kind old lady who led him to change his life. When Sergei was confident that Lushkoff was ready for a proper job, he sent Lushkoff to his friends house for a new job. Due to this, he became a notary who earned 35 roubles a month.
- During their conversation Lushkoff reveals that Sergei's cook, Olga, is responsible for the positive change in him. How has Olga saved Lushkoff?
Ans. During his conversation with Sergei, Lushkoff revealed that it was Sergei's cook, a kind and compassionate old lady named Olga, who was responsible for a positive change in him. When Lushkoff met Olga, she called him by various names and even shout on him. She would then weep for his miserable condition and life. Olga would also cut the wood that Lushkoff had to cut. Her selfless acts gradually made Lushkoff quit drinking. He, thus, started working diligently and was now a respectable man.