

# The Beggar

## Introduction

This story has been written by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov who is a Russian playwright and short-story writer. This story narrates the journey of a beggar to being self-dependent.

## Summary

A beggar asked Advocate Sergei for some money. He said that he had been a school teacher for eight years, but had he lost his job through intrigues. He says that he now has an offer of a job in the province of Kaluga but he has no money to go there. Therefore, he is forced to beg for money. Sergei's eyes fell on the man's overshoes. One of his shoes was high and the other low. Sergei suddenly remembered that the beggar had met him the day before yesterday in Sadovya Street. Then he had told him that he was a student who had been expelled from the school.

Sergei confronts him on his lies and warns him that he would send for the police. The beggar admits that he was lying. He sang in a Russian choir and was expelled for drunkenness. But if he tells the truth then nobody would give him anything. Also, he is unable to get any work. Therefore, he is forced to beg.

Sergei asked the beggar to chop wood for him. The beggar whose name was Lushkoff agreed to do the work, though unwillingly. The beggar was taken by Sergei's cook Olga to the shed to chop wood. Olga gave him an axe. The beggar put a stick of wood between his feet. Then he struck the axe loosely. The wood fell down. He was not able to chop wood. Meanwhile Sergei saw him from his dining room window and felt sorry that he had set a spoiled drunken and perhaps a sick man at work in the cold. After an hour Olga came in and announced that the wood had been chopped. Sergei gave him half a rouble and told him that if he wants to cut wood then he can come on the first day of each month. On the first of the month, the beggar made his appearance and again earned half a rouble. From that day he often appeared in the yard.

He would do some or the other work. When Sergei moved into another house, he called the beggar to help him in packing. The beggar was sober this time. After the moving was over, Sergei gave him a rouble and send him to his friend who had some copying work. From that day Lushkoff came no more to Sergei for work.

They met after two years at the theatre counter. Sergei recognised Lushkoff who told him that he was now working as a notary and got 35 roubles per month.

Sergei was glad that he had changed a beggar into a notary. Lushkoff thanked him for his guidance. But he told him frankly that it was Olga and not Sergei who changed his life. Lushkoff told Sergei that Olga would rebuke him, sit opposite him and weep. She would grow sad for him. Then she would chop wood for him. Owing to her words and noble deeds a change took place in his heart and he decided to give up drinking and take up a job. Then Lushkoff took his leave.

## Message

The story conveys the message that noble deeds can change even the most stubborn of men.

## Extract Based Questions ↘

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. "KIND sir, have pity; turn your attention to a poor, hungry man! For three days I have had nothing to eat; I haven't five copecks for a lodging, I swear it before God. For eight years I was a village school teacher and then I lost my place through intrigues. I fell a victim to calumny. It is a year now since I have had anything to do." The advocate, Sergei, looked at the ragged, fawn-coloured overcoat of the suppliant, at his dull, drunken eyes, at the red spot on either cheek, and it seemed to him as if he had seen this man somewhere before.

(a) State whether the given statement is True or False.  
The advocate is the suppliant in the given extract.

(b) The beggar's ..... made Sergei feel that he had seen him earlier.

(c) When the beggar says 'I fell a victim to calumny,' he means that someone made false statements against him to destroy his reputation .....

(d) Find a word from the extract to complete the following analogy:

defamation : ..... : : accommodation : lodging

(i) advocate

(ii) victim

(iii) calumny

(iv) suppliant

## Answers

(a) False

(b) appearance

(c) as a school teacher

(d) (iii) calumny



2. Next he saw the pseudo-teacher seat himself on a log and become lost in thought with his red cheeks resting on his fists. The woman flung down an axe at his feet, spat angrily and judging from the expression of her lips, began to scold him. The beggar irresolutely pulled a billet of wood towards him, set it up between his feet, and tapped it feebly with the axe. The billet wavered and fell down.

(a) The beggar was called a pseudo teacher because he had posed as a teacher .....

(b) Choose the option that lists the set of statements that are NOT TRUE according to the given extract:

1. The beggar was not a teacher.
2. The beggar was thin and weak.
3. The beggar seemed interested in his work.
4. The beggar knew how to chop wood.
5. The beggar was being supervised by a woman.

- (i) 1, 2 and 3                      (ii) 4 and 5  
(iii) 3 and 4                      (iv) 1, 2 and 5

(c) From the given extract, it can be said that the woman .....

(d) The word 'irresolutely' means the same as .....

## Answers

- (a) to beg  
(b) (iii) 3 and 4  
(c) disliked the beggar  
(d) indecisively or hesitatingly

## Short Answer Type Questions

**Q 1. What did the beggar told Sergei? Why did Sergei threaten to call the police?**

**Ans.** The beggar told Sergei that he was a village school teacher but had lost his job due to intrigues. Now he has a job offer in the province of Kaluga but he has no money to get there. Therefore, he was begging for money. Sergei recalled that he had met the same man two days back. At that time he said that he was a student who has been expelled from the school. Sergei scolds the man for lying and threatens to call the police.

**Q 2. Has Lushkoff become a beggar by circumstance or by choice?**

**Ans.** Lushkoff has become a beggar by choice. He was a drunkard and a work shirker. He thought that it was easy to fulfil one's needs by begging.

**Q 3. What was the first task given to Lushkoff? Was he able to do it?**

**Ans.** Lushkoff was given the work of chopping the wood. No, he was not able to do it. We learn later in the story that Sergei's cook Olga had chopped the wood on his behalf.

**Q 4. Is Lushkoff a willing worker? Why, then, does he agree to chop wood for Sergei?**

**Ans.** Lushkoff is not a willing worker. He agrees to chop

wood for Sergei because he admitted that he would work if he got any. Then Sergei asked him to chop wood for him and he had no option but to agree to it.

**Q 5. Why did Sergei call Lushkoff his 'godson'?**

**Ans.** Sergei called Lushkoff his 'godson' in a sense that he had put him on the right path of life. He told him that before he met him he had been telling lies after lies and not working. He rebuked him and threatened to call the police. Lushkoff then promised to work. Sergei regularly gave him work and also sent him to his friend to do some copying work. Lushkoff himself admits that Sergei's protection had helped him to come out of a pit.

**Q 6. What lies does the beggar tell Sergei?**

**Ans.** The beggar tells Sergei the following lies:

- (i) For eight years, he was a village school teacher and that he had lost his place through intrigues. He fell a victim to calumny. It is a year now since he has had anything to do.
- (ii) The beggar now had an offer of a position in the province of Kaluga. But he hasn't the money to get there.
- (iii) He was a student who had been expelled.

## Long Answer Type Questions

**Q 1. Sergei said, "I am happy that my words have taken effect." Why did he say so?**

**Ans.** Lushkoff told Sergei that he was forced to lie and beg because he was unable to get any job. So, Sergei told him that he could chop wood for him. Lushkoff agrees and Sergei asks his cook Olga to take him to the wood-shed and let his chop wood. After Lushkoff chops wood Sergei paid him half a rouble and asks him to come back on the first of the next month for more work. Lushkoff came back on the first of the month and was again paid half a rouble for his work. After that he often visited Sergei's house and always ~~was~~ would be found for him. Sometimes he would shovel snow, put the wood-shed in order, beat the dust out of rugs and mattresses and so on. Every time he received 20 to 40 copecks for his exertions. When Sergei was moving in to another house he called Lushkoff to help in packing. This time Lushkoff was sober when he came. Sergei was happy to see him in such a state. He gave him one rouble and said that he was happy that his words had taken effect.

**Q 2. How did Sergei help Lushkoff to live life respectfully?**

**Ans.** When Sergei first met Lushkoff he was a beggar. He used to lie to people and beg for money. Sergei offered him work as a woodcutter. Lushkoff came to his house and was paid half a rouble for chopping wood. Sergei asked him to come back on the first of the next month for more work. Lushkoff came back on the first of the next month and was again paid half a rouble for chopping wood. After that he often came



back for a number of odd jobs. He was also called for packing when Sergei was changing his house. Sergei was pleased to see that he was sober and gave him a letter, addressed to his friend, asking him to give Lushkoff some copying work. After that Sergei met Lushkoff after two years, by which time Lushkoff had become a notary. So, it can be said that Sergei helped Lushkoff to live respectfully.

Q 3. During their conversation Lushkoff reveals that Sergei's cook, Olga, is responsible for the positive change in him. How has Olga saved Lushkoff?

Ans. Olga saved Lushkoff and brought about a positive change in him. When he used to come to his house to chop wood, Olga used to call him 'miserable'. She would look into his face and she would become sad and weep. She would call him 'unfortunate'. She shed many tears for his sake. After this, she used to chop wood and do the other jobs which were given to him. Owing to her caustic words and noble deeds, a change came in his heart. He stopped drinking and started working.



## Practice Exercise



### Extract Based Questions

1. Read the following extract carefully and answer the questions that follow.

The child watched them intently and then he made a bold request : "I want to go on the roundabout, please, Father, Mother."

- In the extract, 'them' refers to .....
- State whether the given statement is True or False. The child made a bold request to the owner of the roundabout.
- What was the bold request of the child?
  - To take a toy
  - To take a balloon
  - To take a ride on the roundabout
  - None of the above
- The word that is an antonym of 'timid' in the extract is .....

2. Read the following extract carefully and answer the questions that follow.

"The road was deserted and I was all alone. Suddenly I spotted something that looked like an enormous bushy beast lying sprawled across the road."

- The storyteller is .....
- What was the 'enormous bushy beast' actually?
  - An elephant
  - A fallen tree, with its green branches spread out
  - A fallen tree, with its dry branches spread out
  - A tree of enormous size with its green branches spread out
- 'Deserted' here suggests .....
- A word from the extract which means the same as 'huge' is .....

3. Read the following extract carefully and answer the questions that follow.

"Where shall I put up?" he said. "I hope the town has made preparations."

- ..... is speaking these words in the above extract.
- Where was the little swallow?
  - On the shoulder of the happy prince
  - On the feet of the happy prince
  - In the sky over the river
  - In the air over the city
- The speaker said, "where shall I put up?" because .....
- An antonym of 'hope' is .....



### Short Answer Type Questions

- How did the child react when he saw a flower-seller?
- 'Toto was a pretty monkey.' In what sense is Toto pretty?
- What are the two strange things the guru and his disciple find in the Kingdom of Fools?
- How did the poor children feel when they got the gold?
- How did Sue react when she learnt about Johnsy's belief regarding the falling leaves of the ivy creeper?
- Why did the narrator break down in tears after the fire?
- What did the beggar told Sergei? Why did Sergei threaten to call the police?



### Long Answer Type Questions

- In what way was Iswaran an asset to Mahendra?
- Sergei said, "I am happy that my words have taken effect." Why did he say so?

