

The Beggar - Anton Chekhov

Answers to NCERT Questions

THINK ABOUT IT

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

Ans: Lushkoff resorts to begging because of his unfortunate circumstances. He was a singer who used to sing in the choir. He lost his job because of alcohol abuse, which was however, a problem he had got into by choice. After he was out of the rehabilitation centre, the social stigma of being a drunkard prevented him from getting a job. To make ends meet, he had to resort to begging.

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

Ans: Sergie confronts Lushkoff, and threatens to hand him over to the police for swindling people by telling lies. Lushkoff, tells him the truth. He accepts that he was lying and that he was neither a student nor a school teacher. He was a singer who was thrown out of the Russian Church choir because of his alcoholism. He resorts to lying for survival.

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

Ans: Sergei offers Lushkoff the job of a woodcutter, and he is taken to the wood-shed by Olga, the cook. The scarecrow of a beggar shrugged his shoulders and went behind the cook. His style of walking expressed very clearly that he had consented to chop not for the money, but because he had got trapped in his own game. His alcoholism had robbed him of his health and will to toil.

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

Ans: Sergei believes that his timely advice helped Lushkoff get rid of his need to beg. He may be right from his perspective because he was not aware of the fact that it was Olga who was chopping the wood for Lushkoff. He chose to take pride in having helped a person change. However, he was not right in saying so because he had not shown any compassion towards Lushkoff, but alternately, Sergei was quite harsh on him.

5. Lushkoff is earning thirty five roubles a month. How is he obliged to Sergei for this?

Ans: The encounter with Sergei was that which contributed to bring about a change in Lushkoff's life. It was because of Sergei that he got an opportunity to get acquainted with the cook, Olga. She was so compassionate that she would help him with his work.

The whole incident changed Lushkoff's perception about his future. His stay with Sergei and Olga developed in him a new confidence that helped him secure a decent job, and earn money for his livelihood.

6. 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 is introduced as a very tough and rude woman. She chides Lushkoff for his incompetence, but noticing the difficulty he faced while trying to chop the wood. She would help him, and report to the master that the work was done, and helped him earn half a rouble. Lushkoff continued to work for Sergei on and off. But it would be Olga who did Lushkoff's work. Lushkoff while expressing his gratitude to Sergei for helping him settle down to a normal life says, "it was your cook, Olga, who saved me. He continued by saying that she used to abuse him, feel sad for him, cry, and would feel miserable that he had destroyed his own life. Lushkoff further denied having chopped even one piece of wood. And says that Olga's words, and noble deeds set him on the right path.

Additional Questions

Short Answer Questions (30-40 words: 2 Marks each)

1. What was the first lie that Lushkoff told Sergei?

Ans: Lushkoff tells him that he was a poor hungry man, who had not eaten for three days. He said that he didn't have money to afford a shelter, as he was without a job for about a year. He claims that he was a school teacher who lost his job because of the attempts made by people to defame him.

2. Why did Sergei's anger vanish?

Ans: Sergei saw the beggar irresolutely pulling the billet towards him, and struggling with the assigned job of chopping it into pieces. Seeing this, his anger vanished and he began to feel sorry and ashamed of himself for having set up an unhealthy, weak and drunken man to work as a menial labourer in the cold.

3. How did Lushkoff start earning thirty five roubles every month?

Ans: Appreciating the improvement being shown by Lushkoff, Sergei helped him by giving a recommendation letter to help him secure a job with his friend. Lushkoff had not gone to the yard to work for Sergei again. Two years later, he notices Lushkoff at a ticket window, and he tells his reformer that he was working as a notary and made 35 roubles every month, and that he was doing well.

4. What does Sergei tell Lushkoff after referring to him as his godson?

Ans: Sergei expressed happiness on seeing a reformed Lushkoff and said that he was a godson to him in every sense. He was very happy that despite being rude and strict

with him, he had succeeded in putting him on to the right path. And he thanked Lushkoff for not forgetting his words of advice.

Long Answer Questions (100-150 words: 8 Marks each)

1. Give a character sketch of Lushkoff.

Ans: Lushkoff was a Russian, who was perhaps a good singer as he had been a part of the Church choir. He unfortunately gets addicted to alcohol, that destroys his very existence. He gets thrown out of the choir, and tries to get rehabilitated. But his agony sees no end because his habit preceded him, and he was not able to get a job anywhere. The last resort was to beg to stay alive. He resorted to fabricating stories while trying to secure money from people. His life changed after his encounter with Advocate Sergei, who admonished him, and set him up to be a woodcutter. With the help of Sergei's cook, Olga, he secured money for a job, he had not done. But seeing her concern for him, Lushkoff decides to make a change in his life. He steps back on to the path of righteousness, and remains eternally grateful to Sergei and his cook for helping him do so.

2. Give a character sketch of Olga.

Ans: Olga was the gentle and caring cook of advocate Sergei. She had a very sharp tongue and did not mince words while reprimanding the "woodcutter for not being strong enough to pick up the axe and chopping the wood. Olga would look at him, curse him, abuse him, cry and sympathise with his misfortune and do his work for him. She developed a motherly affection to the boy. Pity and concern were the emotions she showed for the beggar boy. Her affection was exhibited by the fact that she chopped the wood for Lushkoff, so that he can earn money. The way she suffered and helped him, and did not even once reported the truth to the master was laudable. Her behaviour towards Lushkoff made him develop sensitivity towards others' feelings and in the process, he also changed. There was no display of love or compassion by them towards each other. The author has used pathos very explicitly while portraying the character of Olga.

Self- Assessment Test

Short Answer Questions

1. "I am obliged to my circumstances. Explain.
2. How did Lushkoff progress from an alcoholic to a notary?
3. What happened when Sergei threatened the beggar?
4. Why did Sergei threaten to call the police?

5. Why was Sergei ashamed of himself?

Long Answer Questions

1. What would have happened if Olga had been a wicked old woman?
2. After Lushkoff says that it was Olga who chopped the wood and that it was Olga who truly reformed him, the story ends. Write an alternate ending that presents Sergei's reaction to Lushkoff's disclosure.
3. As Sergei, make a diary entry of the day you saw Lushkoff at the ticket window. Express your feelings after he tells you about Olga.