

# THE BEGGAR

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM-ORIENTED STUDY MATERIAL | LATEST CBSE SYLLABUS & PATTERN

## A. Chapter Overview

**Author:** Anton Chekhov (Renowned Russian short story writer and playwright)

**Main Theme:** The power of silent empathy, compassion, and human dignity to reform a broken life. It highlights that true reformation happens when we respect a person's dignity and give them the means to help themselves, rather than through judgment or preachiness.

### Core Moral / Message:

Honest labor brings deep self-respect and purpose. Genuine help goes beyond simple handouts, acting silently and selflessly to protect a person's pride and give them a second chance to restore their worth.

### Important Characters

- **Lushkoff:** A former Russian choir singer dismissed for drinking. He falls into hopeless street begging but makes a dramatic transformation into a respectable notary.
- **Sergei:** A blunt but well-meaning advocate who firmly believes in the dignity of hard labor.

### The True Agent of Change

- **Olga:** Sergei's elderly cook. Outwardly grumpy, she possesses a deeply selfless heart, silently taking over Lushkoff's physical work to protect his pride and spark his recovery.

## B. Very Short Answer Questions (1 Mark)

1. Who is the author of "The Beggar"?

→ Anton Chekhov.

2. What was the name of the beggar?

→ Lushkoff.

**3. What did Lushkoff initially claim to be when begging from Sergei?**

→ A poor village school teacher who lost his job due to local conspiracies.

**4. What was the absolute truth about Lushkoff's past profession?**

→ He was an operatic performer in a Russian choir who was dismissed for his severe alcoholism.

**5. Who confronted Lushkoff about his dishonesty?**

→ Sergei, an advocate who remembered catching him in a different lie earlier.

**6. What did Sergei offer Lushkoff instead of direct financial charity?**

→ The manual job of wood-chopping in his backyard.

**7. How did Lushkoff feel when he accepted the wood-chopping task?**

→ He was highly reluctant, weak, and embarrassed, trapped by his own spoken pride.

**8. Who actually chopped the wood for Lushkoff?**

→ Olga, Sergei's old cook.

**9. Why did Olga chop the wood secretly on his behalf?**

→ To help him earn his wages safely while protecting him from Sergei's anger.

**10. How many times did Lushkoff return to cut wood for the household?**

→ Twice.

**11. What other odd chores did Sergei assign to Lushkoff later on?**

→ Shoveling winter snow, arranging household wood piles, and beating dust out of carpets.

**12. Where did Sergei send Lushkoff once he saw a change in his attitude?**

→ To a friend's copying office with a formal letter of recommendation.

**13. How much did Lushkoff earn during his time at the copying office?**

→ 35 roubles per month.

**14. What respectable profession did Lushkoff hold when he met Sergei two years later?**

→ He had become a formal, independent notary.

**15. Why did Lushkoff reveal the truth about Olga to Sergei at the theater?**

→ To honor her silent, life-saving kindness and ensure she received the credit for his transformation.

## C. Short Answer Questions (2–3 Marks)

### 1. Describe the initial meeting between Sergei and Lushkoff on the street.

→ Lushkoff approached Sergei begging for coins, claiming to be a village school teacher who had lost his job to office politics. Sergei immediately recognized his face, remembering that he had run into him days before under the guise of an expelled college student, and sharply called out his lie.

### 2. Why did Sergei call Lushkoff a liar, and how did the beggar respond?

→ Sergei caught him changing his story to manipulate people's sympathy. When Sergei threatened to call the police for fraud, Lushkoff broke down and admitted the truth—that his alcoholism had gotten him fired from the choir and left him with no choice but to lie to survive.

### 3. What was Sergei's core approach to helping Lushkoff rebuild his life?

→ Sergei believed that direct financial handouts only encouraged lazy habits and ruined self-respect. His approach was to offer honest manual work, believing that physical labor would clean Lushkoff's system and help him rebuild his pride.

### 4. Why was Lushkoff so physically weak and unwilling to work at first?

→ Lushkoff's body had been deeply damaged by years of constant drinking. He was weak, lacked energy, and had never done manual labor, leaving him feeling cold, intimidated, and deeply embarrassed by the heavy ax.

### 5. Detail Olga's hidden actions in the wood-shed.

→ Olga would lead Lushkoff to the shed and begin by scolding him for his dependency. She would then weep over his condition, pick up the heavy ax herself, and chop every log of wood for him while he sat quietly by, ensuring he still got paid.

### 6. Why did Olga choose to hide her work from Sergei?

→ She knew that if Sergei discovered Lushkoff wasn't doing the work, he would immediately fire him and stop helping. She hid her actions to keep the support line open while giving Lushkoff the space to heal.

### 7. How did Olga's silent support affect Lushkoff emotionally?

→ Watching an elderly woman do heavy physical labor for him while weeping over his condition filled Lushkoff with deep shame. This realization shook him out of his patterns and made him want to change.

### 8. What job did Sergei arrange for Lushkoff, and why did it work so well?

→ Sergei gave him a letter of recommendation for a copyist job at a friend's office. This was a perfect match because it used Lushkoff's education and writing skills without demanding the physical strength his body lacked.

**9. Describe the meeting between the two men at the theater ticket window two years later.**

→ Sergei spotted a clean, well-dressed man buying a theater ticket and recognized him as Lushkoff. He was delighted to learn that Lushkoff was now a successful notary earning a comfortable 35 roubles a month.

**10. Why did Lushkoff say that Olga was the real savior of his life?**

→ Lushkoff explained that while Sergei provided the initial opportunity, it was Olga's unconditional, silent sacrifice that actually changed his heart, helping him rediscover his self-worth.

**11. What dynamic kept Sergei from suspecting Olga's work?**

→ Olga kept her work completely quiet, and Lushkoff always showed up on time to pick up his wages. Sergei was so focused on the visual progress of the wood-pile that he never thought to double-check who was actually using the ax.

**12. How does the text show the deep impact of chronic alcoholism on a person's life?**

→ Lushkoff's journey shows that alcoholism is a physical and psychological prison. It cost him his career, ruined his health, and forced him to live a life of constant lies on the street.

**13. Explain how the theme of human dignity is explored in this story.**

→ The story proves that true rehabilitation is about restoring a person's dignity. Handouts only highlight a beggar's dependency, while giving them a chance to earn an honest living helps them rebuild their pride.

**14. What is the central irony regarding the physical work done in Sergei's yard?**

→ The great irony is that Sergei took pride in having "reformed" a beggar through the power of hard physical labor, completely unaware that Lushkoff had never actually chopped a single piece of wood himself.

**15. What primary lesson about social charity can students take from Chekhov's story?**

→ The narrative teaches us that real charity means giving people the practical tools to support themselves, showing that true empathy focuses on long-term independence rather than quick handouts.

## D. Long Answer Questions (4–6 Marks)

### 1. Describe the character of Lushkoff as he appears at the beginning of the story. How does he change by the end?

→ At the start of the narrative, Lushkoff is a tragic figure, physically weakened by chronic alcoholism and stripped of his self-respect. He survives on the cold streets by inventing stories about being a school teacher or an innocent student to extract money from passersby. His body is frail, his eyes are dull, and he shies away from physical labor, finding it much easier to beg than to work.

By the conclusion of the story, his transformation is complete. He appears at the theater as a well-dressed, confident professional working as a notary. He has conquered his dependency, stopped drinking, and built a life of complete independence, trading his street lies for a proud sense of gratitude and self-respect.

### 2. Compare and contrast the different approaches used by Sergei and Olga to help Lushkoff reform.

→ The two characters provide a fascinating contrast between practical opportunity and deep psychological empathy:

Analytical Category	Sergei (The Advocate)	Olga (The Cook)
<b>Core Approach</b>	Based on legal fairness, clear logic, and the structural dignity of labor.	Based on quiet empathy, silent sacrifice, and unconditional support.
<b>Form of Expression</b>	Uses sharp scolding and verbal criticism to highlight Lushkoff's lies.	Weeps openly over his condition while quietly stepping in to do his work.
<b>Understanding Needs</b>	Fails to see that Lushkoff's frail body is physically incapable of heavy labor.	Recognizes his weakness and safely carries his physical load.
<b>Ultimate Contribution</b>	Provides the structural opportunities and office connections needed to advance.	Provides the deep emotional turning point that changes his heart.

### 3. Why is Olga considered the true hero of "The Beggar"? Analyze her silent impact on Lushkoff's recovery.

→ Olga stands as the true hero of the story because her kindness was completely selfless, demanding no reward or public praise. While Sergei acted out of professional pride, taking satisfaction in his own ideas on reform, Olga quietly took over the hard physical work in the freezing shed.

Her impact was deeply psychological. Watching an elderly woman chop wood for him while weeping over his ruined life filled Lushkoff with a powerful sense of shame. This emotional awakening was far more effective than any lecture, making him realize he needed to change. Olga saved his life twice: she kept him from being fired by Sergei, and she gave him back the self-respect he needed to build a successful career.

### 4. Reconstruct the structural stages of the relationship between Sergei and Lushkoff across the narrative.

→ The connection between the benefactor and the recipient goes through several distinct evolutionary stages:

1. Street Confrontation → 2. Master-Servant Labor → 3. Clerical Mentorship → 4. Professional Equality

The relationship began with anger on the street, with Sergei calling Lushkoff out for his dishonest lies. It then moved into a master-servant dynamic, where Sergei felt a sense of pride as an employer, assuming his tough love was working. The third stage brought a shift toward active mentorship when Sergei recognized Lushkoff's educational background and helped him transition to office work.

The final stage is reached at the theater window, where the two meet as professional equals. Lushkoff's honesty in revealing Olga's role completes this journey, changing their connection into a bond of genuine mutual respect.

### 5. "Preaching and criticism fail to change a life where quiet empathy succeeds." Evaluate this statement using evidence from the text.

→ Chekhov's narrative serves as a beautiful defense of quiet empathy over critical judgment. When Sergei scolded Lushkoff and called him a liar, the beggar merely felt trapped and embarrassed, agreeing to work out of a lack of options rather than a real desire to change.

Preaching only highlighted his failures, forcing him into a defensive corner. Olga's approach, by contrast, avoided any lecturing. By quietly taking over his physical burden while weeping over his situation, her silent compassion broke through his defenses. This shared vulnerability is what truly changed his heart, proving that silent acts of kindness are far more powerful than loud criticism.

## E. Character Sketches

### 1. Lushkoff (The Reformed Notary)

Lushkoff is a complex character who demonstrates our incredible capacity for change. He begins the story as a physically broken, dishonest street beggar whose life has been ruined by severe alcoholism.

He uses his education to invent believable lies to survive, showing a deep sense of hopelessness. However, he retains a strong capacity for self-reflection and gratitude. When touched by Olga's silent sacrifice, he finds the strength to conquer his dependency, working diligently at his copying job to eventually build a proud, independent career as a notary.

## 2. Olga (The Anchor of Pure Compassion)

[Image of an elderly Russian woman in a winter coat chopping wood inside a rustic wooden shed with logs scattered around] Olga is the emotional heart of the story, representing pure, unconditional compassion. Outwardly rough and quick to scold, her actions reveal a deeply protective and caring nature. She is entirely free from vanity or a desire for recognition, keeping her hard work a secret to ensure Lushkoff receives all the credit and wages. Her kindness is practical and deeply empathetic; she carries his physical burden without judging his failures, proving that true compassion is measured by silent action rather than empty words.

## F. Theme-Based Deep Dive

### 1. The Reconstructive Power of Labor:

The story highlights that honest work is essential for building a sense of purpose. While direct financial charity keeps a beggar trapped in dependency, transitioning to structured work—first in the yard and later at the copying office—helps Lushkoff rediscover his focus and take control of his own life.

### 2. The Universal Nature of Empathy:

Chekhov intentionally makes a humble cook, rather than the wealthy, educated advocate, the true hero of the story. This choice shows that deep compassion and wisdom are completely universal, requiring no professional status or wealth to step up and save a human life.

## G. Extract-Based Questions

*"I used to sing in the Russian choir and was sent away for drunkenness. But I cannot get along without lying. No one will give me anything if I tell the absolute truth."*

### Q1. What crucial admission does the speaker make to Sergei in this moment?

→ He drops his false stories and admits that his chronic alcoholism cost him his position in the choir, leaving him relying on lies just to survive on the street.

### Q2. What does this reveal about the challenges faced by street beggars?

→ It exposes a harsh reality where individuals often feel forced to invent sensational stories because society frequently ignores the mundane, messy truth of addiction and poverty.

## H. Competency-Based Questions

### 1. If you were designing a civic program to help rehabilitation for homeless individuals in your city, how would you combine Sergei's and Olga's methods?

→ I would use Sergei's approach to build a stable framework of job training and office placements, while incorporating Olga's method by providing peer mentors and counselors. This ensures participants receive both the practical tools for independence and the emotional support needed to stay on track.

## I. CBSE Pattern Previous-Year Style Questions

### 1. Why did Lushkoff consistently choose to invent false identities when begging? (2 Marks)

→ He lied because he knew people felt far more pity for educated professionals who had fallen on hard times than for a simple choir singer dismissed for drunkenness, using these fabrications to secure money more easily.

### 2. Describe the physical changes Lushkoff went through from his first wood-chopping day to his final appearance. (3 Marks)

→ He started as a frail, shivering figure in tattered clothes, too weak to lift an ax properly due to alcohol abuse. By the end, he emerged as a healthy, well-dressed professional wearing a clean coat, showing his complete physical and lifestyle recovery.

### 3. Write a 5-mark character sketch of Sergei, analyzing both his strengths and his blind spots. (5 Marks / 80 Words)

→ Sergei is a wealthy, educated advocate who stands out for his firm belief in the dignity of labor over direct financial handouts. He is a well-meaning benefactor who actively helps Lushkoff transition to a stable clerical career. However, his main blind spot is his pride; his harsh criticism leaves him blind to Lushkoff's physical weakness, and he happily takes full credit for a transformation that was actually sparked by his cook's quiet sacrifices.

## J. Value-Based Questions

### 1. What does Olga's complete silence about her hard work teach us about the true nature of charity?

→ Olga teaches us that **true charity is humble and seeks no public praise or recognition**. Real kindness focuses entirely on helping the other person heal, showing that the most powerful acts of love are often those done quietly behind the scenes.

## K. HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) Questions

### 1. Why did Lushkoff choose to wait until he was a successful notary before revealing Olga's secret to Sergei?

→ He waited because revealing the truth early on might have angered Sergei and disrupted his progress. By waiting until he was a successful equal, he could share the truth with pride, ensuring Olga received the credit she deserved from a position of absolute stability.

## L. One-Page Quick Revision Notes

### Core Synopsis & Quick Reference

**The Reformation Loop:** Street Lies → Fraud Detection → Wood-Shed Ultimatum → Lushkoff's Frailty → Olga's Silent Work → Emotional Awakening → Miscellaneous Tasks → Letter of Recommendation → 35-Rouble Copying Job → Two-Year Gap → Theater Encounter → Confession of the Notary.

### Essential Keywords for Answer Writing:

Dignity of Labor    Silent Sacrifice    Chronic Alcoholism    Notary Public  
Psychological Awakening    Handouts vs Reform    Sycophancy

## M. Exam Booster Section: Top 20 High-Probability Questions

No.	Core Question Focus Area	Exam Probability Weight
1	The specific reasons behind Lushkoff's patterns of street lies	Most Important Question
2	How Olga secretly took over Lushkoff's manual tasks in the shed	Most Important Question
3	Why Olga is considered the true hero of Anton Chekhov's story	Most Important Question
4	The complete physical and professional transformation of Lushkoff	Most Important Question
5	A formal 5-mark character sketch of the cook Olga	Most Important Question
6	A detailed character analysis of Lushkoff's weaknesses and growth	Frequently Asked

No.	Core Question Focus Area	Exam Probability Weight
7	A comprehensive character sketch of the advocate Sergei	Frequently Asked
8	Why Sergei firmly believed in offering labor instead of quick handouts	Frequently Asked
9	The clerical copying job arranged by Sergei as a turning point	Frequently Asked
10	What status and salary Lushkoff achieved after two years	Most Important Question
11	Why Lushkoff felt deep shame while watching Olga cut wood	Frequently Asked
12	The real past of Lushkoff as a dismissed choir member	Revision Must-Do
13	The exact number of times Lushkoff returned to the yard for chores	Medium Weight
14	Why Olga kept her interventions a secret from her employer	Most Important Question
15	The detailed theater confession Lushkoff shares with Sergei	Frequently Asked
16	The core message and moral philosophy of the text	Most Important Question
17	Comparing Sergei's loud lectures with Olga's silent compassion	Revision Must-Do
18	Why Lushkoff succeeded at clerical work but failed at physical tasks	Revision Must-Do
19	The situational ironies surrounding Sergei's belief in his own methods	High (HOTS Topic)
20	The social value of empathy when supporting marginalized individuals	High (Value-Based)