

# WEATHERING THE STORM IN ERSAMA

## **Prashant's visit to Ersama and coming of storm**

Prashant went to his friend's house in Ersama on 27 October, 1999. It was seven years after his mother's death. In the evening, Heavy and continuous rain filled the darkness. Trees were uprooted. The waters entered his friend's house. The speed of the wind was 350 km. per hour.

## **Scene of destruction**

Everything was destroyed there. The scene of destruction was horrible. Prashant and his friend's family had taken refuge on the roof. Prashant won't forget the horrible scene that he saw. He was greatly shocked to see a huge sheet of water all over. It covered everything as far as the eye could see. Houses were broken. Dead animals and human bodies floated everywhere. Huge trees had fallen. Two coconut trees had fallen on the house of Prashant's friend. Its tender coconuts kept them alive for several days.

## **Prashant readies to go home**

For a couple of days Prashant sat huddled on the roof-top with his friend's family. They were nearly frozen in cold wind. Prashant thought of his family. He decided to go, though his friend's family asked him to stay back. Prashant was worried about his family. So he got a strong stick. He then started on his eighteen-kilometre journey to his village. The flood waters were swollen.

## **Prashant on way to his village**

Prashant waded through water. On the way he found two friends of his uncle. They were also returning home. They had to push away many floating dead bodies of human beings and animals to move ahead. There were hardly any houses left in the villages that they passed. Prashant wept thinking that no one in his family would have survived.

### **Prashant reaches his village**

Finally, Prashant reached his village Kalikuda. The roof was the only thing that was left of his house. So he went to the Red Cross shelter to look for his family there. He saw his maternal grandmother there. It was a miracle for them to see Prashant alive. They had thought Prashant to be dead. Prashant's family was there.

### **Prashant, now leader of his village**

Prashant decided to assess the damage and the danger awaiting the survivors. All the houses in the village had been washed away. Prashant organized a group of youths of his village. It pressurized the merchant to give them some rice. They made a fire and cooked the rice. However, the rice was rotting. His next step was to clean the place of filth, urine and floating dead bodies.

### **Children devise a method to get food from above**

On the fifth day, a military helicopter dropped food. But it didn't return. The group deputed the children to lie there. They had the empty utensils on their stomachs. It was to communicate to the passing helicopters that they were hungry. Finally, they got food through airdropping.

### **Prashant becomes a saviour and a social worker**

Prashant became a saviour. He brought the orphaned children and made a shelter for them. He asked the women to look after them. But he soon found that women and children were sinking deeper and deeper in their grief. He made them join the food-for-work programme. It was started by a Non-Government Organization (NGO). He engaged other volunteers to help keep widows to start their lives. He also believed that orphans should be resettled in their own community.

### **After six months**

Six months passed soon after the super cyclone. Prashant now thought about himself. Earlier he had no time to bother about his own pain. The widows and orphaned children of the village thought of Prashant only in their hours of grief.

## NCERT SOLUTIONS

### Think about it

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#### Question 1.

**What havoc has the super cyclone wrecked in the life of the people of Orissa?**

**Answer:**

It was a devastating storm which washed the houses away and destroyed hundreds of villages. It killed thousands of people and uprooted a large number of trees. There were dead bodies all around. People became homeless and many children who had lost their parents became orphans. This crazed destruction continued for the next thirty-six hours. The condition seemed grim after the super cyclone.

#### Question 2.

**How has Prashant, a teenager, been able to help the people of his village?**

**Answer:**

On reaching his village, Prashant found deplorable conditions all around him. He had leadership qualities so he took the initiative to rehabilitate people. He made a team of young volunteers and cleaned urine, filth, vomit and floating carcasses. His team was fully dedicated to serve others. He persuaded grief-stricken women to look after children. In this way he became a ray of hope for all.

#### Question 3.

**How have the people of the community helped one another? What role do the women of Kalikuda play during these days?**

**Answer:**

Prashant took the initiative and mobilised everyone to help one another. In this time of distress the people of the community joined hands together and

started relief work. Women started working in the food for work programme and looked after the orphans.

#### **Question 4.**

**Why do Prashant and other volunteers resist the plan to set up institutions for orphans and widows? What alternatives do they consider?**

**Answer:**

Prashant and other volunteers resisted the plan as they felt that it would not be proper to set up separate institutions for orphans and widows. The group of volunteers was of the opinion that in these institutions children would not be able to get love and widow would suffer from stigma and loneliness and isolation. The group decided to rehabilitate them in their own community. New families were made and the childless widows took care of the orphan.

#### **Question 5.**

**Do you think Prashant is a good leader? Do you think young people can get together to help people during natural calamities?**

**Answer:**

Undoubtedly, Prashant is a good leader. He has all the qualities of a leader. He has a special quality of taking initiatives. His vision is quite clear. He faces adverse circumstances courageously. He is a source of energy for others and has great motivational power. I think that youth is power. This power can be used to assist society during natural disasters. Whatever job is assigned to the youth in such circumstances they perform their duty with full spirit.

**Talk about it**

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#### **Question 1.**

**Talk about the preparedness of the community for a natural disaster.**

**(You can talk about evacuation plans and rehabilitation; permanent safe shelters; warning system; relief efforts; building materials to withstand**

**cyclone/flood/ earthquake, i.e. safe housing; peoples' organisation of their own rescue; the survival instinct, etc.)**

**Answer:**

We are the part of community. Natural calamities may occur any time. We have witnessed many such natural disasters which caused devastation all around. Occurrence of such calamities is not under our control but to prepare ourselves to face such devastation is under our control. If precautions are taken timely, the effects of such calamities may be reduced. For this purpose we should adopt the following points and discuss them :

- Evacuation plans
- Rehabilitation process
- Permanent safe shelters
- Warning systems
- Relief efforts
- Building materials to withstand cyclone/ flood/earthquake
- People's organisation of their own rescue
- The survival instinct etc.

#### **EXTRA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHORT ANSWER TYPE**

**Question 1.**

**Why had Prashant gone to Ersama? What happened there?**

**Answer:**

He had gone to Ersama to spend a day with a friend. He was caught in a terrible cyclonic storm, the likes of which he had never been a witness to.

**Question 2.**

**Describe the storm that hit Ersama on the 27th of October, 1999?**

**Answer:**

It was a dark and menacing storm which had a terrific wind velocity of 350kms/hr. It was accompanied by heavy and incessant rain flooding the whole area.

### **Question 3.**

**How long did the cyclone last? How did Prashant and his friend's family spend the stormy night?**

**Answer:**

The cyclone continued for almost thirty six hours. They spent the night sitting on the roof of the house in the open, because water had filled into the house.

### **Question 4.**

**How was his friend's family luckier than the rest of the villagers?**

**Answer:**

His friend's family had a strong house made of brick and mortar which was able to withstand the fury of the wind, even though coconut trees had fallen onto the roof, damaging it. However, these trees provided the family with food till they were rescued.

### **Question 5.**

**Describe the scene that met Prashant's horrified eyes in the morning at Ersama?**

**Answer:**

It was a devastating sight. A raging, deadly brown sheet of water covered everything as far as the eye could see. Only a few fractured cement houses still stood. Bloating human corpses and animal carcasses floated in every direction.

### **Question 6.**

**How long did Prashant stay at his friend's house? What were the thoughts that kept disturbing him?**

**Answer:**

He stayed at his friend's house for two more days. The only thought that kept disturbing him was whether his family had survived the calamity or if he was going to lose his loved ones once again

**Question 7.****Why did the two days seem like two years to Prashant?****Answer:**

As he sat on the rooftop of his friend's damaged house, unable to venture back home through the rain and flooded roads, he felt helpless and worried about his family back in his village. He was so keen to return to them that the two days seemed like two years to him.

**Question 8.****What made Prashant venture out from the safety of his friend's house in the dangerous situation?****Answer:**

Prashant was worried that his family may have been swept away in his village, and he was determined to find out what had happened to them without any further delay.

**Question 9.****How did Prashant prepare himself for the long trek home?****Answer:**

He took a sturdy stick and then started on his eighteen kilometre long expedition back to his village, wading through the swollen flood waters.

**Question 10.****What were the dangers faced by Prashant on his way back to his village? How did he face them?****Answer:**

The whole path back to his village was under water. He used his stick to determine the shallow parts that he could walk on. At places, he had to wade through waist deep water.

**Question 11.**

**What did Prashant see on his way back home?**

**Answer:**

He saw a number of dead bodies of humans and animals floating in the flood water. He also saw that several villages had been entirely destroyed, where not even a single house remained standing.

**Question 12.**

**Why did Prashant's heart sink on reaching his village?**

**Answer:**

His heart sank on seeing the extent of damage that his village had sustained. He saw only the remains of the roof of his house in place of the house. Some of the family belongings were caught in the nearby branches of trees. His family was nowhere to be seen.

**Question 13.**

**Where did Prashant go to look for his family? Who did he spot first?**

**Answer:**

Prashant went to the Red Cross shelter to look for his family. He spotted his grandmother first.

**Question 14.**

**Why did his grandmother rush towards Prashant?**

**Answer:**

She rushed towards him out of joy at seeing him alive. She considered it a miracle that he was safe and sound and had been restored to the family.

**Question 15.**

**Who were the family members that Prashant found at the shelter?**

**Answer:**

He found his grandmother, his brother, sister, his uncles and aunts at the shelter.

**Question 16.**

**What was the extent of damage caused by the storm in Prashant's village?**

**Answer:**

Eighty six lives had been lost in the village, and ninety six houses had been washed away in the village.

**Question 17.**

**Why did Prashant decide to step in and lead the villagers?**

**Answer:**

Prashant realised that the people at the shelter were being engulfed by a deathly grief and there wasn't enough food for the survivors. He also realised that someone had to show the people a way out of the situation and gain control over their feelings and emotions.

**Question 18.**

**What was the first successful mission organised by the group of villagers under Prashant's leadership?**

**Answer:**

The first mission was to pressurise the village merchant to part with his rice so that the hungry villagers could be fed.

**Question 19.**

**After feeding the survivors, what was the next task organised and fulfilled by Prashant?**

**Answer:**

He organised a team of volunteers to clean the shelter of filth, urine, vomit and floating carcasses, and to take care of the wounds and fractures of the many who had been injured.

**Question 20.**

**What was the event that took place on the fourth day at the camp?**

**Answer:**

On this day, a military helicopter flew over the shelter and dropped some food parcels on the ground close to the shelter.

**Question 21.**

**Why did Prashant ask the children to lie on the sand with utensils on their stomachs?**

**Answer:**

He did this so that the helicopter pilots would see them and drop down the food packets for them.

**Question 22.**

**How did Prashant help the orphaned children?**

**Answer:**

He brought them together and put up a polythene sheet shelter for them. Women were mobilised to look after them while the men got food and materials to build the shelter.

**Question 23.**

**How did Prashant help the women to overcome their grief?**

**Answer:**

He did this by persuading them to start working in the food-for-work programme started by an NGO.

**Question 24.**

**Why was Prashant not keen to send the orphans and widows to government institutions?**

**Answer:**

He was against this idea as he felt that in such institutions, children would grow up without love, and widows would suffer from stigma and loneliness.

### **Question 25.**

**How did Prashant's wounded spirit heal?**

**Answer:**

It healed because he was so busy making sure that the victims were taken care of by various government agencies and NGOs that he had no time to worry about his own loss and pain.

### **LONG ANSWER TYPE**

#### **Question 1.**

**What havoc had the super cyclone wrecked in the lives of the people of Orissa?**

**Answer:**

The super cyclone caused great damage and destruction, leaving hundreds of men, women, children and animals dead or injured. It blew away houses, brought down trees and wiped out entire villages. The whole area was submerged in water. Family members were separated and it left behind many orphans and widows. In addition, people had to go without food for days together.

#### **Question 2.**

**How has Prashant, a teenager, been able to help the people of his village?**

**Answer:**

Prashant took over the responsibility of leading the village. He was instrumental in organising the survivors into groups to cook, clean, and rebuild the village from scratch. He supervised the building of shelters and made sure that people who were wounded and injured received adequate medical help.

He also made sure that the orphans and widows were not packed off to impersonal foster care at government institutions, but resettled them in their

own community, in new foster families made up of widows taking care of the orphans. He also organised cricket matches and other sports events to bring some joy into the lives of the children and persuaded the women to work in the food-for-work programme started by an NGO.

### **Question 3.**

**How did the people of the community help one another? What role did the women of Kalikuda play during these days?**

**Answer:**

First of all, they worked as a team under the leadership of Prashant. They helped him in pressurising the local merchant to part with rice to feed the survivors. They cooked food by collecting branches from fallen trees. They cleaned the shelter of filth, urine, vomit and floating carcasses and took care of the people with wounds and injuries. They also helped to create new foster families made up of childless widows and children without adult care. The women also worked with an NGO in their food-for-work programme.

### **Question 4.**

**Why did Prashant and the other volunteers resist the plan to set up institutions for orphans and widows? What alternatives did they consider?**

**Answer:**

Prashant and the other volunteers were aware of the stigma attached to being sent to the government institutions, and the loneliness that the widows would have to suffer there. Similarly, the orphans would have to live a life away from their roots, at the mercy of people who would not be sensitive to their emotional needs. To solve this problem, they came up with the brilliant idea of creating foster families where the childless widows would care for the orphaned children, thereby fulfilling their mutual emotional needs.

### **Question 5.**

**Do you think Prashant is a good leader? Do you think young people can get together to help people during natural calamities?**

**Answer:**

Undoubtedly, Prashant is a born leader, which he proves by helping the people of Kalikuda village. He helps them to literally rise from the debris of a super cyclonic storm that had almost wiped out the whole village. He leads by example, selflessly identifying the most urgent needs and working to fulfil them. In the process, he puts aside his own grief and suffering, in trying to find relief and help for the other survivors.

He gauges the falling spirits of the village people and gets them to work manually to remove the debris, rebuild structures, and ensure that the people get something to eat. In a bid to help his people, he even forgets about his own loss, pain and grief. He finds a brilliant solution for the care of those left widowed or orphaned, by creating foster families with childless widows looking after orphaned children. From his example, we can see that it is possible for young people to work together and make a huge difference to the entire community in situations like natural calamities.