

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 6: WEATHERING THE STORM IN ERSAMA



WEATHERING THE STORM IN ERSAMA

~Summary~

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Prashant Goes to Ersama

On 27th October, 1999 Prashant goes to meet his friend. It was seven years after his mother's death. His friend lives in the coastal town of Ersama. It is 18 kms from Prashant's village, Kalikuda.

Cyclone Hits Ersama

A cyclonic storm hits Ersama that evening and continues for 36 hours. It is accompanied by continuous and heavy rains. This results in flooding of the town.

As a result, Prashant and his friends' family gather at the rooftop of the house to save their lives. They stay there for two days. They eat coconuts from the coconut trees that had fallen on the rooftop.

Destruction Caused by Cyclone

The 350km per hour winds accompanying the cyclone destroyed everything. Water has spread everywhere. Houses were broken and trees had fallen. Dead animals and human bodies were floating everywhere.

Prashant Decides to Go to His Village

Prashant is worried about the well-being of his family. Hence, he decides to go to his village although the place is still flooded with water. He takes a long stick to help him locate the road and has to swim when he loses the road. On the way, he has to push away many dead bodies of humans and animals to make his way. With great difficulty, he covers the distance of 18 kms and reaches his village.

Prashant's Family Relieved to See Him

Prashant's family members are happy and relieved to see him as they had given him up for dead. Prashant was also happy to see all his family members safe and sound in the Redcross camp. 86 people died in Prashant's village in the cyclone and the people who had survived the cyclone took refuge in the Red Cross shelter as all the houses have been destroyed by the cyclone.

Prashant Becomes Leader at the Shelter

Prashant stays at the shelter as his house has been destroyed by the cyclone. The shelter is dirty and overcrowded. The victims in the shelter are wounded and hungry. Prashant takes on the responsibility of helping them by organising a group of youths and elders and pressurised the grain merchant to give rice for the hungry people. He cleans the shelter and helps the victims to get food. The orphans in the shelter are handed over to childless widows so that they would get proper love and care. The men in the shelter procure food and materials for the shelter while the women work for the "Food for Work programme started by an NGO.

After Six Months

After six months of the devastation of the cyclone, Prashant is feeling better. His wounded spirit has healed as he did not have time to think about his pain. The widows and orphans of his village seek his help whenever they are in trouble. Thus, Prashant's courage and affection for needy people teach us to stand bold and cool in hard times.

Conclusion of Weathering the Storm in Ersama

The chapter – Weathering the Storm in Ersama illustrates how we should form a community of workers wherever a calamity strikes so that we can help people rather than merely depending on the government for aid.

NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 42-43)

(Think about it)

Question 1. What havoc has the super cyclone wreaked in the life of the people of Orissa?

Answer: The super cyclone uprooted and crashed ancient trees to the earth. People and houses were swiftly washed away. A raging, deadly, brown sheet of water covered everything as far as the eye could see; only fractured cement houses still stood in a few places. Bloating animal carcasses and human corpses floated in every direction. All round even huge old trees had fallen.

Question 2. How has Prashant, a teenager, been able to help the people of his village?

Answer: Prashant, who was just nineteen years old, decided to lead the people of his village. He organized a group of youths and elders to jointly pressurize the merchant once again to part with his rice. This task was done successfully. For the first time in four days, the survivors at the cyclone shelter were able to fill their bellies.

Then he organized a team of youth volunteers and cleaned the shelter of filth, urine, vomit and floating carcasses, and tended to the wounds and fractures of the people who had been injured by the cyclone.

He brought the children who were orphaned together and put up a polythene sheet shelter for them.

Question 3. How have the people of the community helped one another? What role do the women of Kalikuda play during these days?

Answer: The people of the community helped one another by grouping under the leadership of Prashant. They convinced the Merchant to help them with availability of rice. The youth task force made children lie in the sand left by the waters around the shelter with these utensils on their stomachs, to communicate to the passing helicopters that they were hungry. The message got through and they began receiving food and other basic needs at regular intervals.

Women of Kalikuda were mobilized to look after the orphaned children, while the men secured food and materials for the shelter. The women began to work in the food-for-work programme started by an NGO.

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 resist the plan to set up institutions for orphans and widows because they felt that in such institutions, children would grow up without love and widows would suffer from stigma and loneliness.

They considered the alternative of resettling the orphans in their own community itself, possibly in new foster families made up of childless widows and children without adult care.

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: Yes, Prashant is a great leader. Even though he himself was grief-stricken, he decided to lead the people of his village. He organized a group of youths and elders to help others in the tough time. He took several initiatives and made it possible for people to put their lives back on track.

Yes, I think young people can get together to help people during natural calamities. Young people are full of energy and strength. They can come up with new and useful ideas to reduce the devastating effects of calamities by helping more and more people.