

WEATHERING THE STORM IN ERSAMA

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. Bloated 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.

