

# Weathering The Storm in Ersama - Harsh Mander

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## Answers to NCERT Questions

### THINK ABOUT IT

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

**Ans:** The cyclone brought with it heavy rains and strong winds. As a result, a majority of houses were demolished or blown away and only the strong cement houses were spared. Dirty water covered the land as far as the eye could see. Many people lost their lives. Floating human bodies and bloated animal carcasses were seen all around. The strongest of the trees had been uprooted. The scenes were gruesome. Many people lost their relatives and many children had become orphans. There was shortage of food. People were sad and helpless, and a pall of gloom had descended on the people all around.

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

**Ans:** Prashant set out on his trip back to his village that was eighteen kilometres away with the help of a sturdy stick. He tried to get a grip over himself because he was shocked when he saw the effects after the cyclone. He decided to step in as the leader of his village. He organised a group of youths and elders to jointly pressurise the merchant to give rice for the people living in the shelter. He was successful in this task. He then organised a team of youth volunteers to clean the shelter and to tend to the wounds of the people who had been injured in the cyclone.

Prashant also brought a number of orphaned children together and constructed a polythene shelter for them. While women were mobilised to look after them, the men secured food and other essentials for the shelter. When he realised that the women were becoming too grief-stricken, he persuaded them to start working in the food-for-work programme, which was initiated by an NGO. He also organised sports events for children. He worked selflessly to get his village and its people back on to their feet.

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

**Ans:** The people of the community got together and began to help one another under the leadership of young Prashant. They pressurised the merchant to part with the rice, he had hoarded for the people in the shelter. They gathered branches from fallen trees to use as firewood for cooking. The military helicopter dropped some food parcels but did not return. The youth task force gathered empty utensils from the shelter and made the children lie in the sand with the utensils on their stomachs to communicate to the passing helicopters that they were hungry. The message went through and the helicopters became more consistent in air-dropping food and other basic needs.

Women were mobilised to look after the orphans, while the men secured food and materials for the shelter. In spite of being grief stricken, the women started working in the food-for-work programme started by an NGO. Everyone contributed according to their capabilities. The village stood together in their moment of crisis.

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

**Ans:** Prashant and his group of young volunteers resisted the plan of setting up institutions for the orphans and widows because they feared that they would be required to lead a life without love, affection, and loneliness. Besides, they worried about the stigma that the widows would have to deal with. They alternately planned to resettle them in their own community to provide them with a homely environment. They suggested setting up foster families that would comprise of childless widows who would take care of the orphaned children.

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

**Ans:** Yes, Prashant is a good leader. He forgot his personal grief, when he saw the plight of his village and villagers, got hold of himself and decided to lead the excavation, evacuation and relief activities. He was able to garner the support of all the villagers, and as a team, they stood together in their moment of crisis. This is a great example to emulate. It is the young who should get together to help people in distress, however, simple or severe they may be. They have the physical and mental strength and presence of mind to act in the right manner, simultaneously setting examples to their young ones.

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## **Additional Questions**

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

**1. What happened in the evening when Prashant was at his friend's house in Ersama?**

**Ans:** It was the 27th of October, young Prashant had gone to his friend's house that was about 18 kilometres from his village. Suddenly, in the evening, a dark storm gathered, strong winds started blowing with great speed and uprooted trees. The heavy and incessant rains caused the water levels to rise. The angry water rushed inside. They were neck deep in water. Houses, livestock, and human beings got razed to the ground, and were floating lifelessly.

**2. How did Prashant spend the first two days after the cyclone?**

**Ans:** Prashant was at his friend's house when the cyclone struck. All of them climbed on to the roof of the house to escape the impact of the gushing waters. He was up there for two days. They had nothing to eat, but survived on the tender coconuts that had fallen off from the coconut trees that had crashed on to their roof.

**3. Who was long given up as dead?**

**Ans:** Prashant's maternal grandmother was the first person he spotted, when he came back to his village. Weak and hungry, she rushed up to him with her hands outstretched and eyes overflowing with relief because the entire family had assumed that he would have been swallowed by the cyclone. Many hours had gone by, and no one had seen him, but with the grace of God, he returned to secure his people.

**4. "Was he to be bereaved once again? Explain.**

**Ans:** Prashant was stuck for nearly two days on the roof of his friend's house. And 48 hours seemed a very long time. He was in tears, and was disturbed and concerned about his family and their safety. This doubt occurs to him, whether he would be bereaved again, because he had already lost his mother seven years back, and losing someone again was very painful for the young man. He was therefore, worried if he would be bereaved again because of the devastating cyclone.

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

**1. As Prashant, write a letter to the Red Cross, thanking them for their timely help in providing relief to the survivors of the devastating cyclone.**

**Ans:** 140 Naveen Chambers

Burdas Village

Orissa

2 November 1999

Administrator

Red Cross Society

Orissa

Sub: Expression of gratitude

Dear Sir,

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of all of us at Burdas Village, to express our gratitude to you and all your staff, for providing us with all the necessary support to tide over our misery.

We appreciate the care and perfection with which you handled all the injured patients and provided them with the required medication and aid. I wish to inform you that we have made a fair amount of progress in bringing back normalcy.

Along with expressing gratitude, I also wish to extend the support and cooperation of our youth force to help in all your operations as and when you may require manpower.

Thank you,

Yours respectfully,

Prashant

## **2. How did Prashant contribute to improve the condition of the shelter?**

**Ans:** The condition of the shelter was very pathetic. There was a fear of spreading epidemic. Moreover, people were depressed, hungry and wounded. Prashant tackled all these problems wisely. First of all, he took up the responsibility of a leader. He organised a group of youths and elders who were able to compel the merchant to provide from his hoarded stock of rice. They collected wood, cooked rice and fed the people. Then he arranged a team of youths to clean all the surroundings of the shelter. They looked after the wounded. He persuaded women to look after the orphans. He worked towards giving them mental happiness by organising games and matches for the young. To make the widowed women self-sufficient and strong, he convinced women to work for food. His sincerity towards the problem at hand and the exceptional handling of the crisis is a great example of courage and compassion.

## **3. Give the character sketch of Prashant.**

**Ans:** Prashant was a young boy who played a major role in resurrecting his family and his villagers after they were devastated in a cyclone in the year 1999. Sitting on the roof top of his friend's house, alive but not safe, the only thought that passed through his mind was the safety of his people. As soon as the storm receded, he willfully went back to his village, with a lot of fear and worry. When he got back and saw the state of affairs, he gathered himself up with strength and passion, garnered the support of a team of youngsters, and worked relentlessly towards the upliftment of the destroyed village. It is very reassuring to see how this young man puts on the mantle of leadership, and selflessly serves the entire community. His commitment and dedication serves as an eye-opener to the keepers of the nation. He did not just work up a team and issue instructions, but was on the ground to ensure the mental and physical upliftment of his near and dear ones.

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## **Self- Assessment Test**

### **Short Answer Questions**

1. What was the extent of damage caused by the cyclone?
  2. What did Prashant see while he was returning to his village?
  3. What was “a blessing in disguise?”
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### **Long Answer Questions**

1. As Prashant, make a diary entry of the horrible experience.
2. Write an article for the school magazine on “Disaster Management.
3. The waves kept lashing at our backyard. There was a warning.....  
Complete the story and provide an appropriate title.