

Sub: English

Handout: 2

Module: 2/2

Lesson: 6

Weathering the storm in Ersama

Class: IX

Lesson Explanation

Arranging food for destitute

The next morning Prashant realized that he had to get over his emotions and take charge of the situation. Around 2500 people were there in the shelter and 86 people had been killed by the super cyclone. People had lost everything in the storm. They had been at the shelter for the last four days. They had been eating raw coconuts but now these were insufficient for the large number of people.

Prashant though only of nineteen years, decided to lead the crowd of destitute. He formed a group of villagers, consisting of both the elders and the youth. They planned to persuade the local merchant to give them the stock of grains and rice to feed the people. The group succeeded to get rice for the crowd. No one was bothered by the fact that the rice was actually rotten rice because they were starved and were ready to eat even the rotting rice. The branches of broken trees were used to kindle a fire. The survivors ate a meal after four days. The second task of the group was to clean the shelter. They removed garbage, cleaned excretory wastes, dead bodies and tended the injured.

An innovative idea

On the fifth day after the super cyclone a military helicopter flew over the shelter and dropped food parcels. It did not return later but they needed food. So, the youth in the crowd gathered empty utensils. The children were made to lie in the sand with the utensils on their stomachs to indicate to the passing helicopters that they needed food. The helicopters got the message and returned with food and other necessities for the crowd at the shelter.

Caring for the orphans and widows

Prashant found that a large number of children had been orphaned. He brought them together and put up a polythene sheet shelter for them. Women were given charge to look after them, while the men secured food and materials for the shelter.

The grief of the orphan children and women who had lost their family was growing with each passing day. Prashant requested the women to work in the NGO called "Food for work". In order to keep the children busy, he organised sports events for them. He took help of other volunteers to help the widows and orphans to return to normal lives. The government had proposed to set up separate institutions for widows and orphans but this proposal was successfully rejected by Prashant. He felt that these separate institutions would neither help the orphaned children nor would they be beneficial for the widows. These volunteers wanted to settle the orphaned children and widows in foster families where they would get love and security.

After six months of the disaster, Prashant had come out of the grief of losing his house and property because he was so much engrossed in helping others that he forgot his pain. All the widows and orphans looked up to him in their time of grief and so, he learned to come out of his gloom and smiled.

Message

This lesson conveys the message that when a natural calamity strikes, the members of the community should help themselves. They should not be totally dependent upon the government to provide help. It also gives the message that the youth have a major role to play in organising the community to help themselves. You should provide a leadership role to solve the problems of the common people. In this lesson we see the leadership provided by Prashant during the super storm in Odisha village. We should specially concentrate our efforts on women and children who form the most vulnerable section of society.

Justification of the title

A super storm happens in Ersama in Odisha state 1999. A boy called Prashant sees nearly 2,500 people in a pitiable condition in a storm shelter. He mobilized the people to help themselves and provided succour to them. He arranged accommodation and food for them even after the storm was over. For several months he was involved in rehabilitation work for the community. Since the article speaks about the efforts of the people to overcome the destruction caused by the storm the title is appropriate.

Character sketch of Prashant

Prashant is a young boy, just 19 years old. He finds himself in a village devastated by the super storm in Orissa in 1999. He visits the storm shelter in his village and decides to help them out. He takes up a leadership role and starts organising the people. For several months, he helps the people to overcome their difficulties and come back to normal life. He becomes a saviour of orphans and widows. Thus we find Prashant to be a born leader who is ready to work hard to help people to solve their problems. The people of his village are grateful for all his efforts. He is a role model for the youth of our country.

----- The End -----
