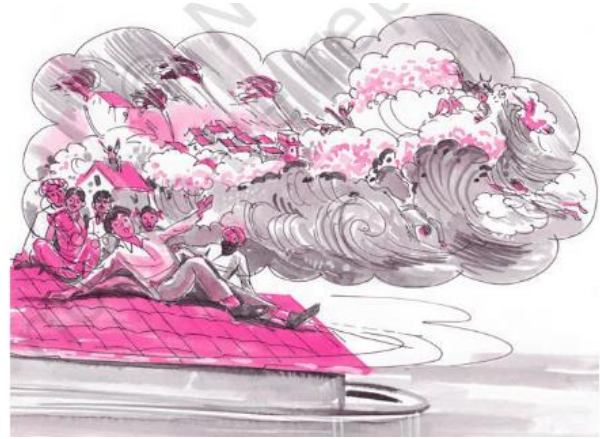


## NCERT IX: Weathering the Storm in Ersama

ON 27 October 1999, seven years after his mother's death, Prashant had gone to the block headquarters of Ersama, a small town in coastal Orissa, some eighteen kilometres from his village, to spend the day with a friend. In the evening, a dark and **menacing** storm quickly **gathered**. Winds beat against the houses with a speed and **fury** that Prashant had never **witnessed** before. Heavy and **incessant** rain filled the darkness, ancient trees were **uprooted** and crashed to the **earth**.



**Screams rent** the air as people and houses were **swiftly washed away**. The angry waters **swirled** into his friend's house, neck deep. The building was of brick and **mortar** and was strong enough to survive the **devastation** of the wind's **velocity** of 350 km per hour. But the **cold terror** of the family grew with the **crashing** of trees that had got uprooted and fallen on their house, some time in the middle of the night, damaging its roof and walls.

The **crazed** destruction **wrought** by the cyclone and the **surge** of the ocean continued for the next thirty-six hours, although wind speeds had reduced **somewhat** by the next morning. To escape the waters rising in the house, Prashant and his friend's family had taken **refuge** on the roof. Prashant will never forget the shock he experienced at his first **glimpse** of the devastation wrought by the super cyclone, in the grey light of the early morning. 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. Two coconut trees had fallen on the roof of their house. This was a **blessing in disguise**, because the **tender** coconuts from the trees kept the **trapped** family from **starving** in the several days that followed.



For the next two days, Prashant sat **huddled** with his friend's family in the open on the rooftop. They froze in the cold and incessant rain; the rain water washed away Prashant's tears. The only thought that **flashed** through his mind was whether his family had survived the fury of the super cyclone. Was he to be **bereaved** once again? Two days later, which seemed to Prashant like two years, the rain **ceased** and the rain

waters slowly began to **recede**. Prashant was **determined** to **seek out** his family without further delay. But the situation was still dangerous, and his friend's family **pleaded** with Prashant to stay back a little while longer. But Prashant knew he had to go.

He **equipped** himself with a long, **sturdy** stick, and then started on his eighteen-kilometre **expedition** back to his village through the **swollen** flood waters. It was a journey he would never forget. He constantly had to use his stick to locate the road, to determine where the water was most **shallow**. At places it was **waist** deep, and progress was slow. At several points, he lost the road and had to swim. After some distance, he was relieved to find two friends of his uncle who were also returning to their village. They decided to move ahead together.

As they **waded** through the waters, the scenes they witnessed grew more and more **macabre**. They had to push away many human bodies — men, women, children — and carcasses of dogs, goats and cattle that the **current swept** against them as they moved ahead. In every village that they passed, they could **barely** see a house standing. Prashant now **wept out** loud and long. He was sure that his family could not have survived this **catastrophe**.

**Eventually**, Prashant reached his village, Kalikuda. His heart went cold. Where their home once stood, there were only **remnants** of its roof. Some of their **belongings** were caught,



**mangled** and twisted in the branches of trees just visible above the dark waters. Young Prashant decided to go to the Red Cross shelter to look for his family.

Among the first people he saw in the crowd was his **maternal** grandmother. Weak with hunger, she rushed to him, her hands **outstretched**, her eyes **brimming**. It was a **miracle**. They had long **given him up** for dead.

Quickly word spread and his extended family gathered around him, and hugged him tight in relief. Prashant **anxiously** scanned the **motley**, **battered** group. His brother and sister, his uncles and aunts, they all seemed to be there.

By the next morning, as he took in the **desperate** situation in the shelter, he decided to get a **grip** over himself. He sensed a deathly **grief** settling upon the 2500 strong crowd in the shelter. Eighty-six lives were lost in the village. All the ninety-six houses had been washed away. It was

their fourth day at the shelter. So far they had survived on green coconuts, but there were too few to go around such a **tumult** of people.

Prashant, all of nineteen years, decided to **step in** as leader of his village, if no one else did. He organised a group of youths and elders to jointly pressurise the **merchant** once again to part with his rice. This time the **delegation** succeeded and returned **triumphantly**, wading through the receding waters with food for the entire shelter. No one cared that the rice was already **rotting**. Branches from fallen trees were gathered to light a **reluctant** and slow fire, on which to cook the rice. For the first time in four days, the survivors at the cyclone shelter were able to fill their **bellies**. His next task was to organise a team of youth volunteers to clean the shelter of **filth**, urine, vomit and floating carcasses, and to tend to the **wounds** and **fractures** of the many who had been injured.

On the fifth day, a military helicopter flew over the shelter and dropped some food parcels. It then did not return. The youth task force gathered empty utensils from the shelter. Then they **deputed** the children to 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 after that the helicopter made regular rounds of the shelter, airdropping food and other basic needs.

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 **mobilised** to look after them, while the men secured food and materials for the shelter.

As the weeks passed, Prashant was quick to recognise that the women and children were sinking deeper and deeper in their grief. He **persuaded** the women to start working in the food-for-work programme started by an NGO, and for the children he organised sports events. He himself loved to play cricket, and so he organised cricket matches for children. Prashant



engaged, with other volunteers, in helping the **widows** and children to pick up the broken pieces of their lives. The initial government plan was to **set up** institutions for orphans and widows. However, this step was successfully **resisted**, as it was felt that in such institutions, children would grow up without love, and widows would suffer from **stigma** and **loneliness**. Prashant's group believed orphans should be resettled in their own community itself, possibly in new **foster families** made up of childless widows and children without adult care.

It is six months after the devastation of the super cyclone. This time Prashant's **wounded spirit** has **healed** simply because he had no time to **bother** about his own pain. His handsome, youthful face is what the widows and orphaned children of his village seek out most in their darkest hour of grief.

## Vocabulary

1. **Weather** (verb) – Endure, withstand, survive, ride out, live through, get through सामना करना
2. **Menacing** (adjective) – Threatening, foreboding, ominous, sinister, baleful भयभीत करनेवाला
3. **Gather** (verb) – Assemble, congregate, convene, muster, accumulate इकट्ठा होना
4. **Fury** (noun) – Rage, wrath, anger, temper, ire प्रकोप/ क्रोध
5. **Witness** (verb) – Observe, see, view, behold, watch देखना
6. **Incessant** (adjective) – Continuous, unceasing, never-ending, relentless निरंतर
7. **Uproot** (verb) – Deracinate, displace, extract, remove, eradicate उखाड़ देना
8. **Earth** (noun) – Ground ज़मीन
9. **Scream** (noun) – Shriek, yell, shout, holler, cry चीख
10. **Rend** (verb) – Tear, rip, rupture, split, cleave फाड़ना/ चीरना
11. **Swiftly** (adverb) – Quickly, rapidly, speedily, briskly, fast तेजी से
12. **Wash away** (phrasal verb) – to carry (something) away by the movement of water. बहा ले जाना
13. **Swirl** (into) (verb) – move in a twisting or spiralling pattern. घुम-घुम कर आगे बढ़ना
14. **Mortar** (noun) – A mixture of sand, water, and cement or lime that is used to fix bricks or stones to each other
15. **Devastation** (noun) – Destruction, ruination, desolation, annihilation विनाश
16. **Velocity** (noun) – Speed, pace, rate, momentum, rapidity गति
17. **Cold** (adjective) – Emotionless, taciturn, unfriendly, unemotional, unsympathetic भावहीन
18. **Terror** (noun) – Horror, dread, fear, fright, panic भय
19. **Crashing** (noun) – The act of something collapsing or smashing टूटना
20. **Crazed** (adjective) – Mad, deranged, insane, lunatic पागल/ उन्मत्त
21. **Wrought** (verb) – Do, perform, bring about, accomplish करना
22. **Surge** (noun) – Rise, swell, increase, upsurge, rush उफान

23. **Somewhat** (adverb) – Slightly, rather, moderately, to a certain extent कुछ हद तक
24. **Refuge** (noun) – Sanctuary, shelter, haven, retreat शरण
25. **Glimpse** (noun) – Glance, peek, look, view, sight झलक
26. **Raging** (adjective) – Furious, violent, intense, fierce, wild प्रचंड
27. **Fractured** (adjective) – Broken, cracked, shattered, split टूटा हुआ
28. **Bloated** (adjective) – Swollen, inflated, enlarged, distended सूजा हुआ
29. **Carcass** (noun) – the dead body of an animal. शव
30. **Corpse** (noun) – a dead body, especially of a human being rather than an animal. लाश
31. **Float** (verb) – Drift, glide, hover, sail, slide तैरना
32. **Blessing in disguise** (phrase) – something that seems bad or unlucky at first but causes something good to happen later
33. **Tender** (adjective) – Soft, delicate, gentle, sensitive मुलायम/ कोमल
34. **Trapped** (adjective) – Caught, ensnared, confined, imprisoned फंसा हुआ
35. **Starve** (verb) – Hunger, famish, fast भूखा रहना
36. **Huddle** (verb) – curl one's body into a small space. सिमट कर (बैठना)
37. **Flash through mind** (phrase) – suddenly or quickly think of it
38. **Bereaved** (adjective) – Mourning, grieving, sorrowful, lamenting शोकसंतप्त
39. **Cease** (verb) – Stop, halt, end, terminate, conclude बंद होना
40. **Recede** (verb) – Diminish, lessen, decline, wane घटना
41. **Determined** (adjective) – Resolute, firm, unwavering, steadfast ठान लिया हुआ
42. **Seek out** (phrasal verb) – Search for, look for, hunt for, pursue खोजना
43. **Pleaded** (adjective) – Beseched, begged, implored, entreated प्रार्थना करना
44. **Equip** (verb) – Provide, supply, furnish, arm से लैस होना
45. **Sturdy** (adjective) – Strong, robust, solid, tough मजबूत
46. **Expedition** (noun) – Journey, trip, tour, venture यात्रा
47. **Swollen** (adjective) – larger than usual

48. **Shallow** (adjective) – (of the sea, a lake, or a river) become less deep over time or in a particular place. उथला
49. **Waist** (noun) – The part of the human body below the ribs and above the hips कमर
50. **Wade** (verb) – walk with effort through water or another liquid or viscous substance. पैदल पार करना
51. **Macabre** (adjective) – Gruesome, ghastly, morbid, grim, eerie भयानक
52. **Current** (noun) – Stream, flow, undercurrent, tide धारा/ प्रवाह
53. **Sweep** (verb) – move or push (someone or something) with great force.
54. **Barely** (adverb) – Hardly, scarcely, just, only, merely मुश्किल से
55. **Weep out** (phrasal verb) – to cry out रोना
56. **Catastrophe** (noun) – Disaster, calamity, tragedy, mishap प्रलय
57. **Eventually** (adverb) – Ultimately, in the end, finally, sooner or later आखिरकार
58. **Remnant** (noun) – Remainder, residue, leftover, fragment अवशेष
59. **Belonging** (noun) – Possession, property, asset, item संपत्ति
60. **Mangle** (verb) – Mutilate, deform, distort, damage बिगाड़ना
61. **Maternal** (adjective) – Motherly, matriarchal, maternalistic मातृ
62. **Outstretch** (verb) – Extend, stretch out, spread फैलाना
63. **Brim** (verb) – be full of a particular quality, feeling, etc. से भर आना
64. **Miracle** (noun) – Wonder, marvel, phenomenon, sensation चमत्कार
65. **Give up** (phrasal verb) – Quit, abandon, relinquish, surrender त्याग देना
66. **Anxiously** (adverb) – Eagerly, nervously, apprehensively, restlessly चिंतित रूप से
67. **Motley** (adjective) – Varied, assorted, mixed, diverse मिश्रित
68. **Battered** (adjective) – Beaten, damaged, worn, abused पीड़ित/ क्षतिग्रस्त
69. **Desperate** (adjective) – Hopeless, frantic, dire, urgent हताश
70. **Grip** (noun) – Grasp, hold, clasp, clutch पकड़
71. **Grief** (noun) – Sorrow, sadness, misery, pain दुख
72. **Tumult** (noun) – Commotion, turmoil, uproar, pandemonium कोलाहल/ हंगामा

73. **Step in** (phrasal verb) – Intervene, intercede, mediate, become involved  
हस्तक्षेप करना
74. **Merchant** (noun) – Trader, dealer, seller, supplier व्यापारी
75. **Delegation** (noun) – Representation, delegation, group, committee  
प्रतिनिधिमंडल
76. **Triumphantly** (adverb) – Victoriously, successfully, jubilantly विजयी रूप से
77. **Rot** (verb) – Decompose, decay, deteriorate, spoil सड़ना
78. **Reluctant** (adjective) – Hesitant, unwilling, disinclined, averse अनिच्छुक
79. **Belly** (noun) – Stomach, tummy, gut पेट
80. **Filth** (noun) – Dirt, muck, grime, sludge गंदगी
81. **Wound** (noun) – Injury, cut, gash, laceration चोट
82. **Fracture** (noun) – Break, crack, split, rupture टूट
83. **Depute** (verb) – Appoint, assign, designate; delegate (authority or a task).  
किसी विशेष कार्य के लिये भेजना
84. **Orphaned** (adjective) – Parentless, bereaved, abandoned अनाथ
85. **Mobilise** (verb) – Organize, muster, rally, marshal जुटना
86. **Persuade** (verb) – Convince, urge, influence, coax मनाना
87. **Widow** (noun) – A woman whose spouse has died and who has not remarried  
विधवा
88. **Set up** (phrasal verb) – Establish, start, initiate, launch स्थापित करना
89. **Resist** (verb) – Oppose, defy, withstand, counter विरोध करना
90. **Stigma** (noun) – Disgrace, shame, dishonor, taint कलंक
91. **Loneliness** (noun) – Isolation, solitude, desolation, aloneness अकेलापन
92. **Foster family** (noun) – a family that provides custody or guardianship for children whose parents are dead or unable to look after them. पालक परिवार
93. **Wounded** (adjective) – Hurt, injured, harmed, damaged घायल
94. **Spirit** (noun) – Soul, psyche, essence, vitality आत्मा
95. **Heal** (verb) – Cure, mend, remedy, restore ठीक होना
96. **Bother** (verb) – Trouble, disturb, annoy, vex परेशान करना



## Practice Exercise

1. **What was Prashant's initial reaction to the storm at Ersama?**
  - A. He was excited about it.
  - B. He was indifferent to it.
  - C. He found it terrifying.
  - D. He ignored its potential threat.
2. **How did Prashant view the fallen coconut trees on their roof?**
  - A. As a menace
  - B. As a symbol of destruction
  - C. As a source of food
  - D. As a hindrance to their safety
3. **What kept Prashant going during his journey back to his village?**
  - A. The hope to find his belongings
  - B. The possibility of meeting his family
  - C. To document the destruction
  - D. To look for a safer shelter
4. **Which statement best describes the condition of Prashant's village after the cyclone?**
  - A. The village was partly damaged.
  - B. Only a few houses were destroyed.
  - C. Most of the houses were intact.
  - D. The entire village was devastated.
5. **Why did Prashant decide to take on a leadership role?**
  - A. He was the oldest in the village.
  - B. He felt a sense of duty and responsibility.
  - C. He was formally appointed by the village elders.
  - D. He wanted to gain recognition.
6. **What was Prashant's main priority after securing food for the shelter?**
  - A. Building more shelters
  - B. Communicating with the outside world
  - C. Cleaning and medical care
  - D. Organising recreational activities
7. **Why did Prashant put up a polythene sheet shelter?**
  - A. For the elderly members of the village
  - B. For the orphaned children
  - C. For himself and his close friends
  - D. As a storage area for food
8. **How did Prashant and other volunteers convey their hunger to the helicopter?**
  - A. They shouted and waved.

- B. They lit a huge fire.
  - C. They used mirrors to reflect sunlight.
  - D. They had children lie in the sand with utensils on their stomachs.
9. **What did Prashant's group believe regarding orphans and widows?**
- A. They should be relocated to the city.
  - B. They should be put in institutions.
  - C. They should be resettled within their community.
  - D. They should be trained for employment.
10. **Six months after the cyclone, what best describes Prashant's emotional state?**
- A. He was deeply traumatized.
  - B. He had healed due to his active involvement.
  - C. He felt disconnected from his village.
  - D. He was overwhelmed with grief.

## Answer

1. C    2. C    3. B    4. D    5. B    6. C    7. B    8. D    9. C    10. B

## Explanation

1. C) The passage mentions that "Winds beat against the houses with a speed and fury that Prashant had never witnessed before," indicating that he found it terrifying.
2. C) The passage states that "two coconut trees had fallen on the roof of their house" and the coconuts kept them from starving, indicating they saw it as a source of food.
3. B) Throughout the passage, Prashant's primary concern was his family, so the possibility of meeting his family kept him going.
4. D) The passage states that "All the ninety-six houses had been washed away," so the village was completely devastated.
5. B) The passage suggests Prashant's sense of duty as he steps up to help his community in desperate times.
6. C) The passage states that after securing food, he organized a team for "cleaning the shelter" and tending to the injured.
7. B) The passage mentions that Prashant set up a shelter for the large number of children who had been orphaned.
8. D) The passage describes how they deputed children to lie in the sand with utensils on their stomachs as a sign of their hunger.
9. C) The passage states that Prashant's group believed orphans should be "resettled in their own community itself."
10. B) The passage states, "This time Prashant's wounded spirit has healed simply because he had no time to bother about his own pain," indicating he had healed due to his active involvement.