

WORDSCAPES COMPETITION ENTRY
STORIES INSPIRED BY THE RAMAYANA
SMALL INITIATIVE, BIG CHANGE

It was the year 2016. The most intense cyclone in the north Indian ocean , the Vardah , had hit the south Indian coast. Rain poured on and on relentlessly , with strong winds accompanying it. All schools were shut down and families stayed put at their homes.

Pranathi, a little girl, was at home with her two elder sisters, mother and father. She watched the rain lashing at the windows in her room, and stared outside the balcony gloomily. It had been ages since she had gone to school, and much to her own surprise, she had begun missing it very much. Electricity had been cut for most houses, including hers. There was not much to do , though everyone tried to make the best of the situation. Pranathi was glad she had her sisters to

accompany her at that time. She also began reading many novels to keep herself entertained. However, she longed for the storm to calm down so that everything could go back to normal again so she could see her friends and teachers at school.

All these thoughts coursed through her when her mother called for dinner. As they all ate together, they checked for any updates on the storm. Pranathi heard from her father that the situation had only become worse still. Huge destruction had taken place with the uprooting of several trees and the damage was worth nearly crores of rupees. Thousands of people were being evacuated to safer places, even amidst the rain. The cyclone, moreover, had also resulted in the loss of a few lives in their state.

Pranathi listened to all this in horror. She thought of the great number of people injured and all of the trees ruined in her school and felt worried. She wanted to do her bit to help. She

had grown up listening to stories from the Ramayana. She especially loved the story of the little squirrel who helped Lord Rama by using small pebbles and grains of sand to help build the bridge the Vanaras were building together. Though the Vanaras laughed at it, it continued working as it loved Lord Rama with all its heart. Ultimately, it was the little grains of sand brought by the squirrel which bound the bridge together and made it sturdy. Pranathi learnt that however small, every task is equally important. However small, an effort should always be appreciated.

Inspired by this, Pranathi began to think of what she could do for helping the people suffering because of the cyclone. Soon, she thought of building a sturdy raft, and delivering it to the people who needed it. She gathered all the empty water cans in her house , rope and some other materials and tried to build it. However, it seemed too huge a task for her alone.

She went to her sisters for help and showed them what she was working on in her room. When her sisters heard her idea, they laughed and told her, "Pranathi, your little raft is not going to help save anybody. Don't waste your time building it. We could do something more interesting and fun together." Pranathi replied, "No. This could be of help to some people in the more affected areas of our city. I will continue building it." Her sisters then left her alone .

Poor Pranathi now began to doubt if her idea would be of any use. She told her parents about it and asked for their opinion. Her parents were completely on board with the idea and encouraged her sisters to help complete building her raft. Her siblings joined her, though a bit reluctantly. With their combined effort, the raft was finally completed. It was pretty strong too. Later, Pranathi and her father carefully drove to the flooded areas of the city and gave the raft to the people there, who found it extremely useful.

Pranathi felt very happy as she saw her raft being used. When her sisters heard that Pranathi's idea had worked, they also became enthusiastic to help more people in whatever way they could. Pranathi was not satisfied with making the raft alone though. She had heard that there were food shortages in many areas. Her mother told her of an organization near her house which made packages of food and medicine and delivered it to the affected. Pranathi wanted to join them and this time, her sisters joined her too.

Thankfully , the storm had lessened in their area, so the three siblings made their way to the organization and enquired about what they could assist in. The people of the organization were very proud to see the children wanting to make a change. They were only too happy to let them help in packing the food and medicine kits. So the three siblings actively participated for many days.

Finally, the storm subsided in the entire state. Electricity was back; it was announced that schools would be reopened the next week and everything was going back to normal. Later, as Pranathi and her sisters cycled to school, they were shocked to see the change in the surroundings.

Their school was usually surrounded by a great number of trees, but now most of them had been uprooted! Pranathi was also part of her school's gardening club and she had planted many plants and saplings the previous year. They had been growing well and flourishing, but post the cyclone, not a single one survived. Pranathi was devastated at the sight and teared up. She made up her mind to find a solution for this too.

She urged her friends to bring seeds and saplings and plant them again. It would take time, but eventually, all the plants could be returned to their former glory and the school would look as it had done before. Everyone agreed and the

following week was spent in replenishing all the greenery they had lost. Pranathi was extremely determined to bring everything back to normal, and with the support of her friends and teachers, there was no doubt that she would. Her school also presented her with an award, as all the teachers had also noticed the amount of effort Pranathi had been putting after the cyclone. She flushed with happiness as everybody cheered for her.

Pranathi had done exactly what the little squirrel in the Ramayana had done, and she had helped a number of people, gained a lot of support from friends and family, and had earned the praises of many who had received her help. Imagine, all this because she was inspired by the story of the squirrel in the Ramayana!

Moral: Even the smallest of efforts can make a huge difference.

Name: W.Sahithi

Age: 14 years

Age group: (b) 14 to 17 years

Nationality: Indian